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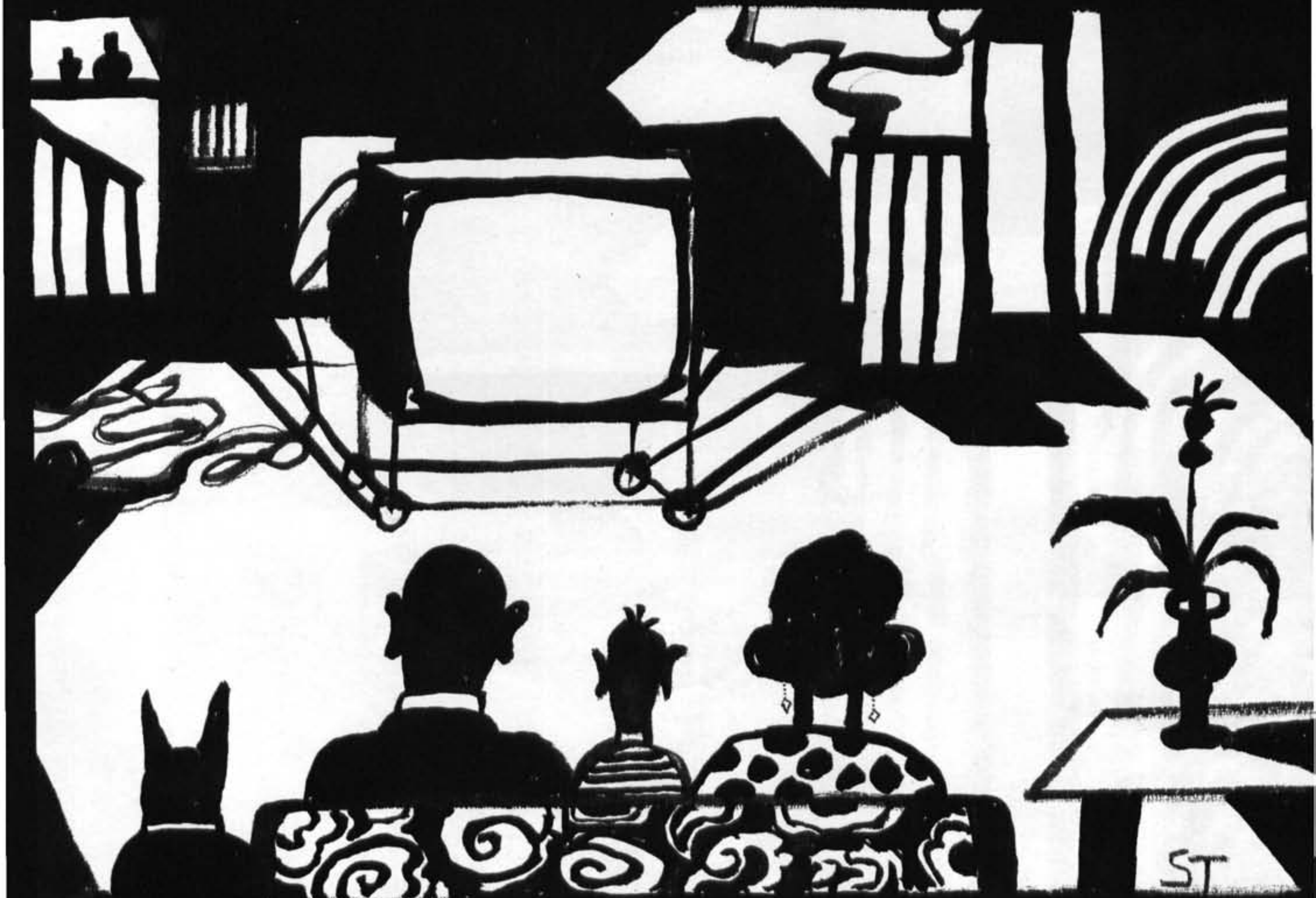
THE NEW YORKER



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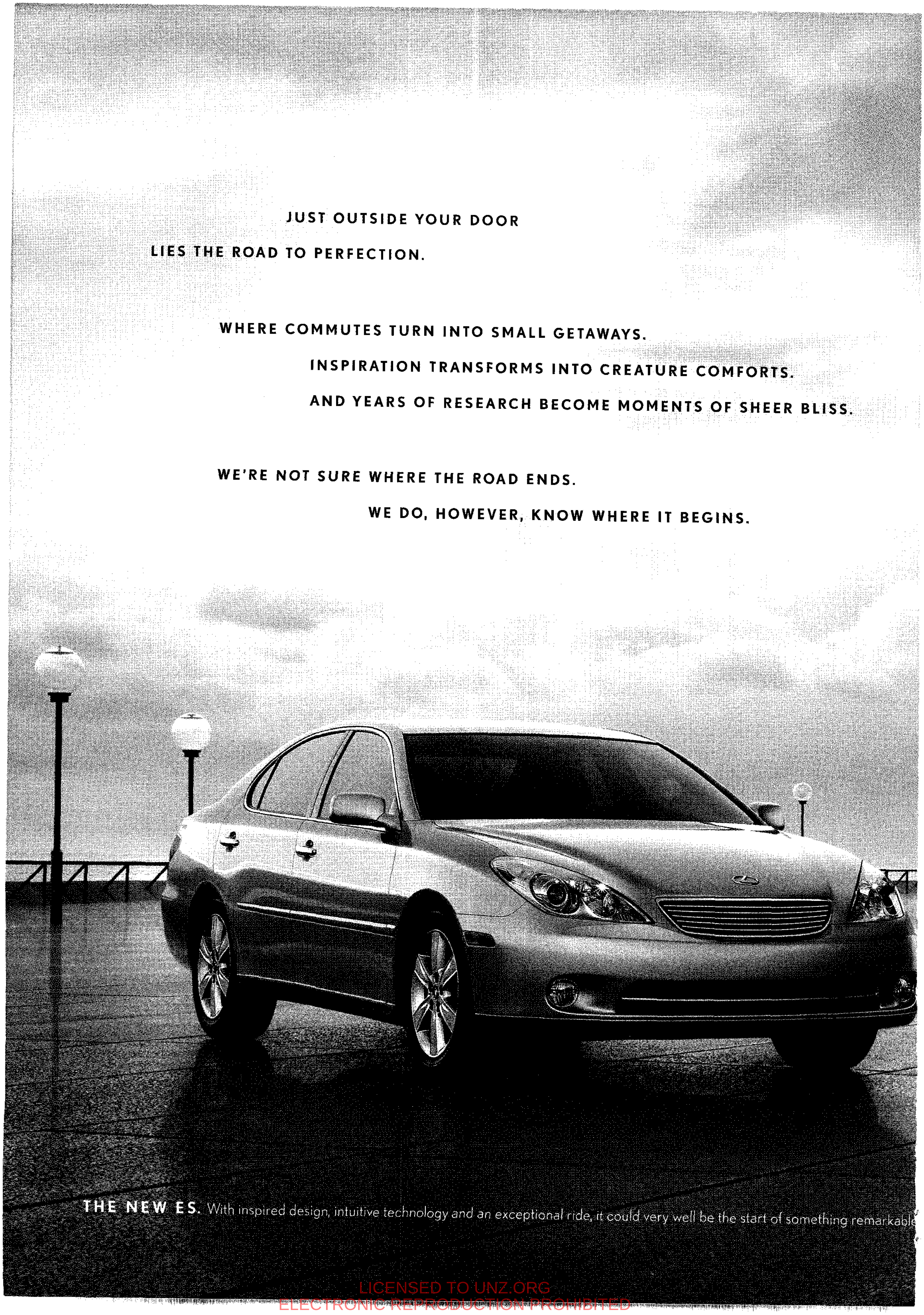
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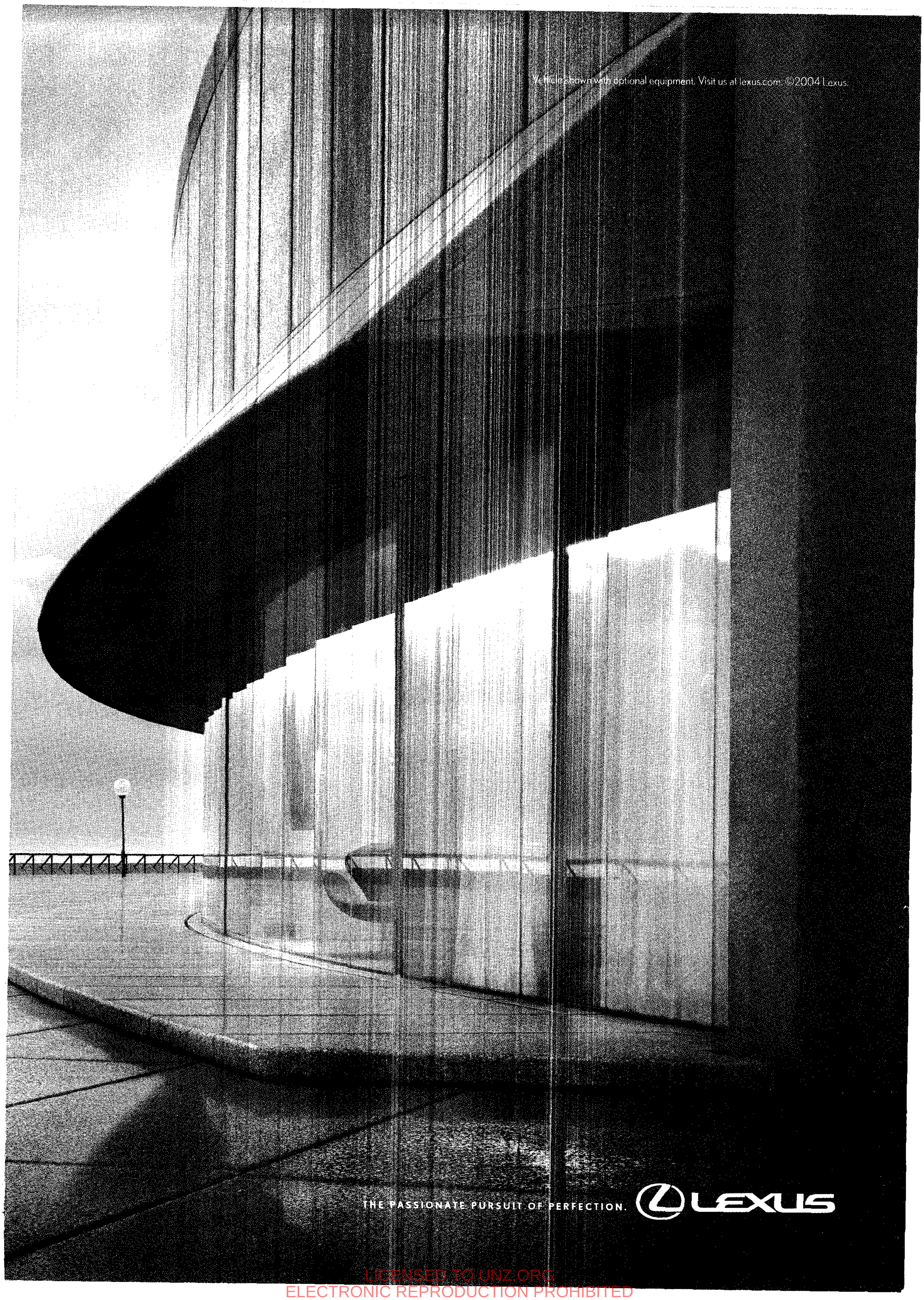
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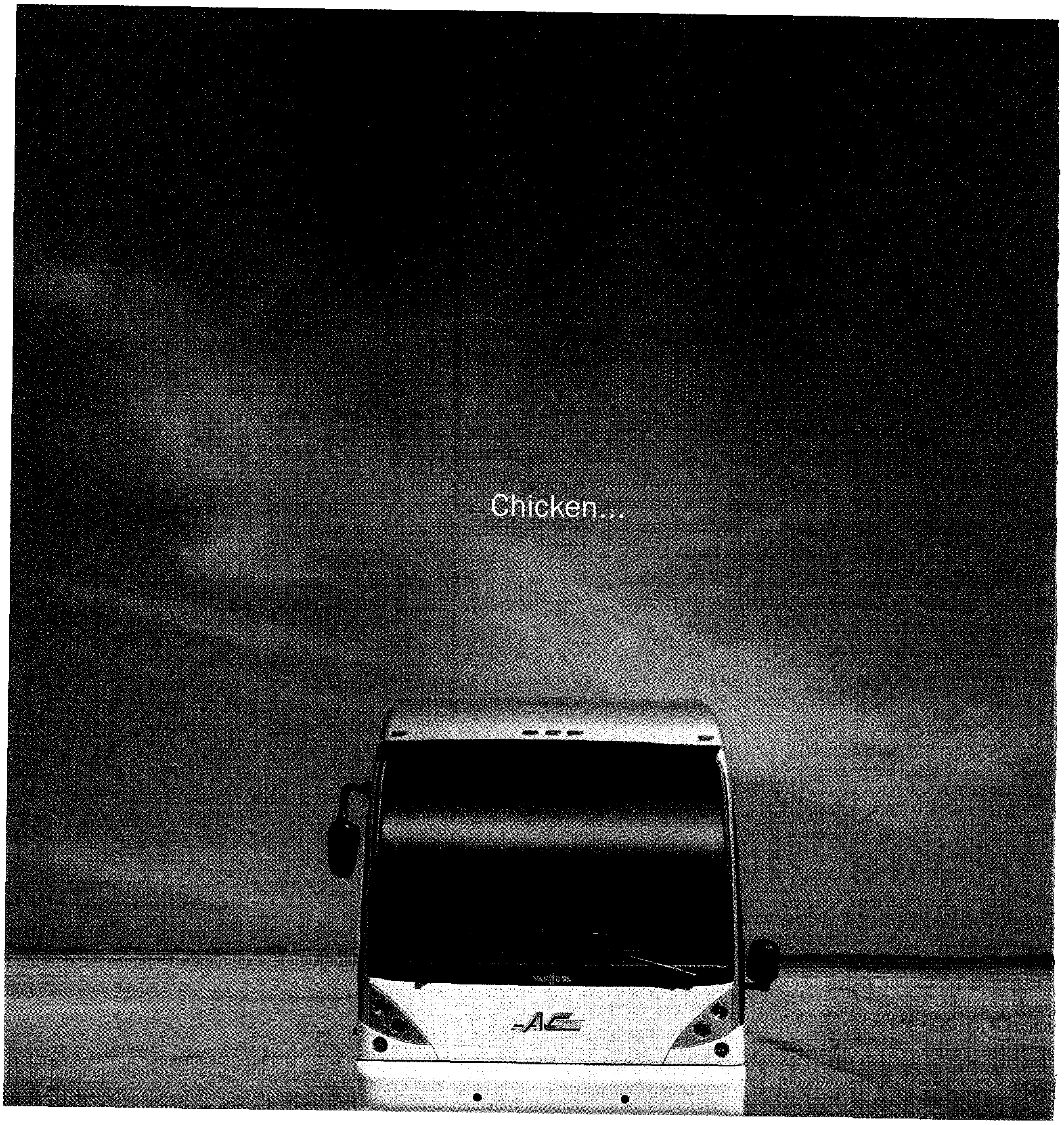

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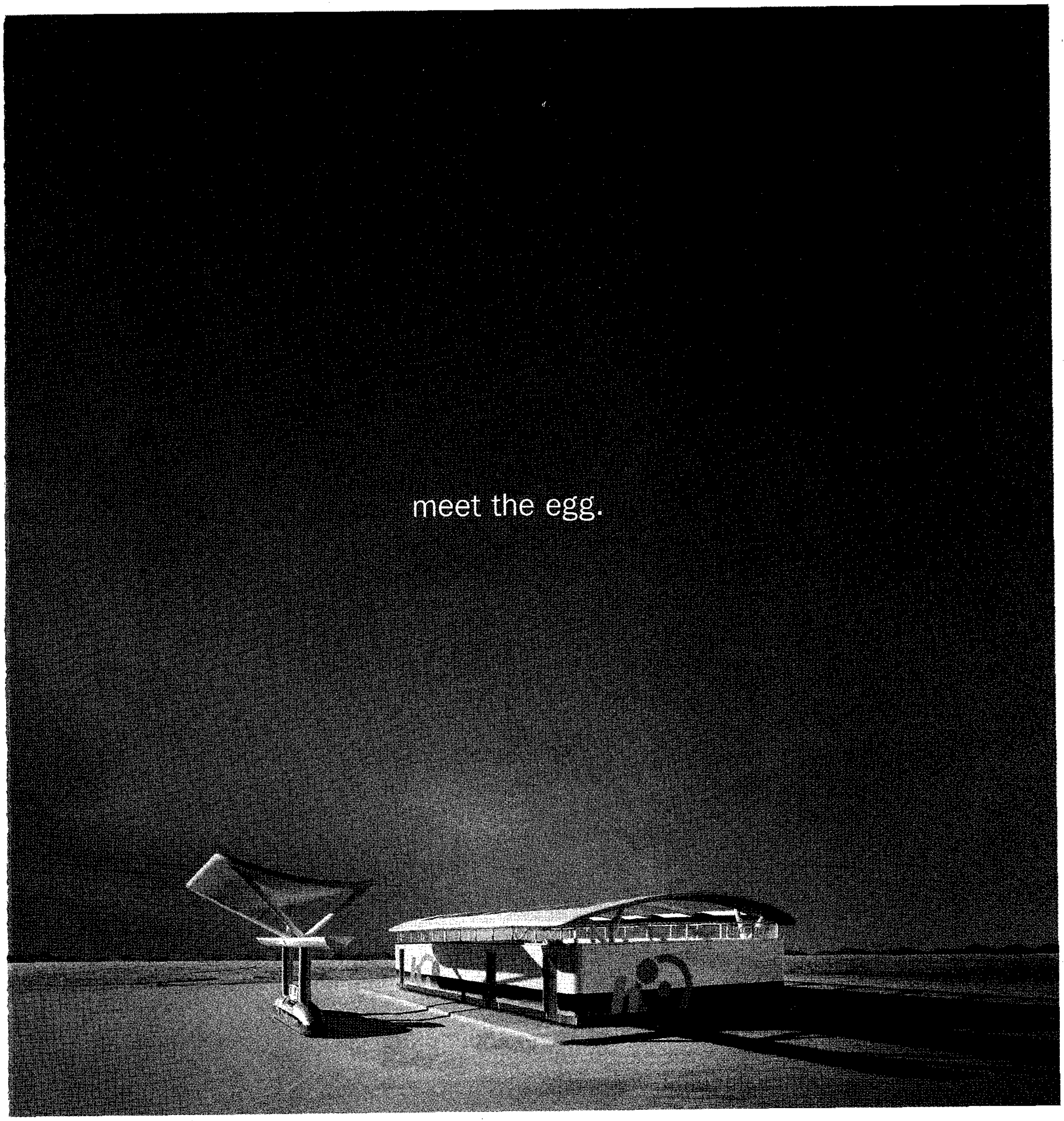

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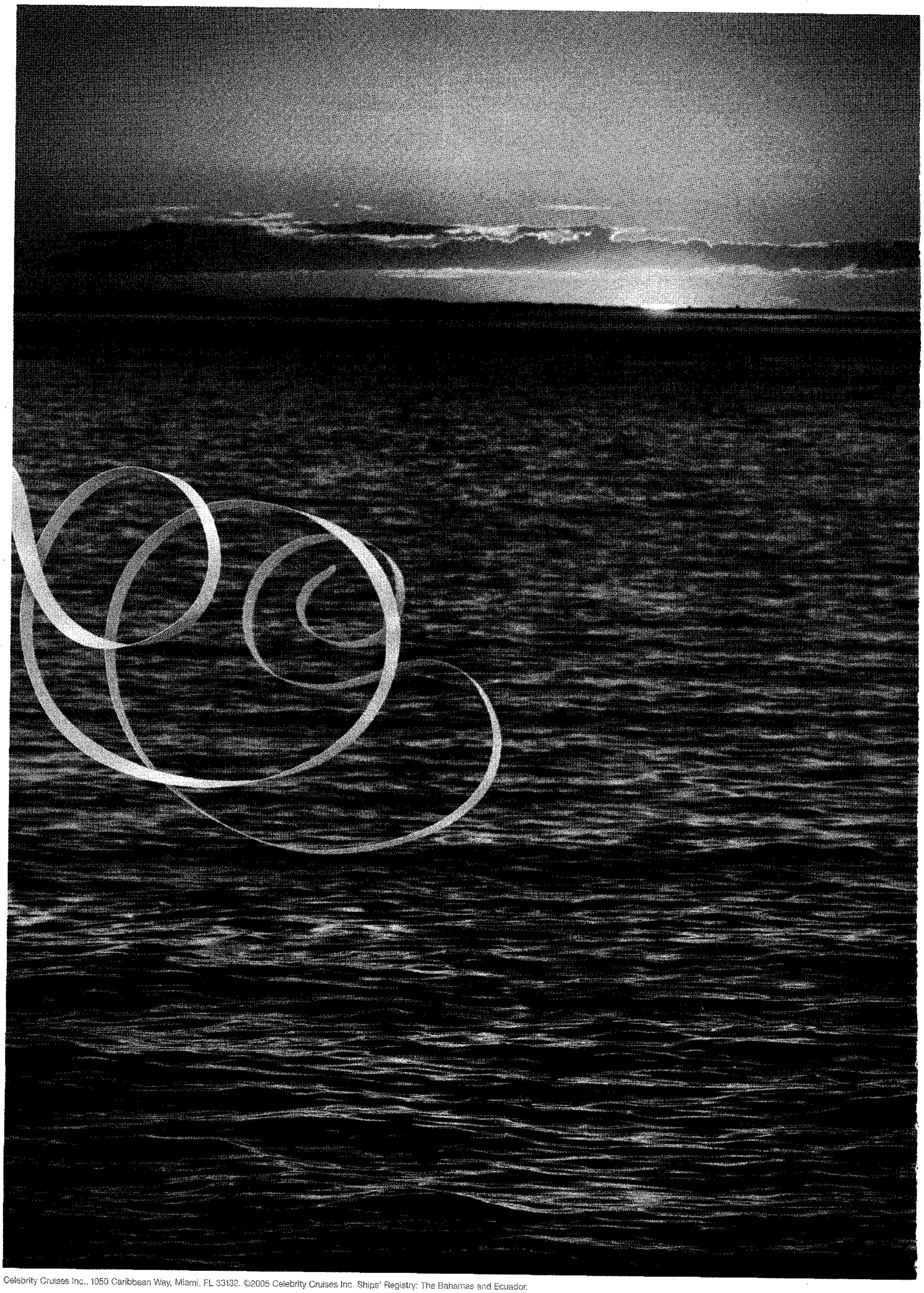

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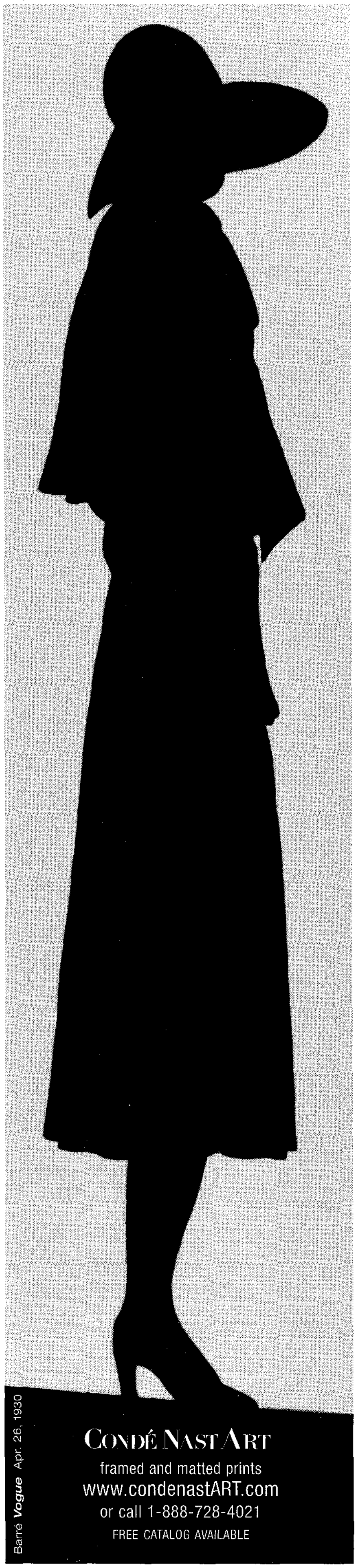

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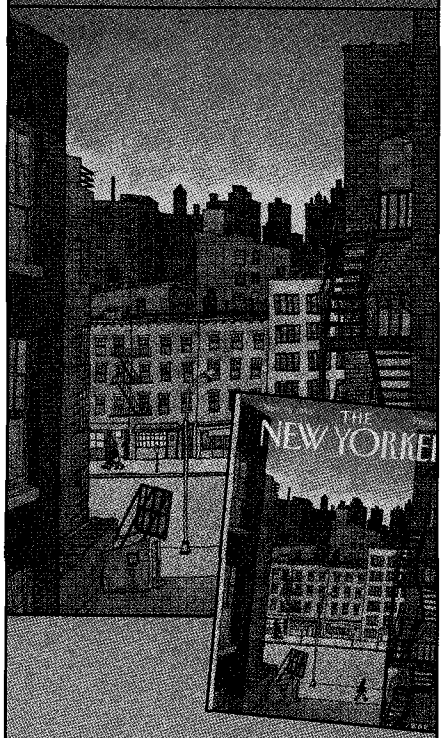

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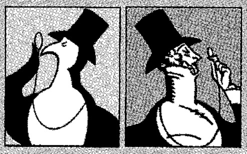

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CONTRIBUTORS

Dan Baum (“Battle Lessons,” p. 42), a staff writer, has published two books, “Smoke and Mirrors” and “Citizen Coors.”

Billy Frolick (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 49) is a co-writer of the DreamWorks film “Madagascar” and the author of the humor book “The Five People You Meet in Hell,” both due out in May.

Oscar Hijuelos (“Lunch at the Biltmore,” p. 50) is the author of six novels, the most recent of which is “A Simple Habana Melody.” A Broadway musical production of “The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love,” which won a Pulitzer Prize, will open later this year.

Jeffrey Toobin (“Killer Instincts,” p. 54) has been a staff writer since 1993.

Saul Steinberg (Cover) is the subject of “Steinberg at *The New Yorker*,” by Joel Smith, with an introduction by Ian Frazier. The book, which comes out next month, chronicles the artist’s nearly six decades of work for the magazine.

Margaret Talbot (“The Auteur of Anime,” p. 64) was a United States-Japan Foundation Media Fellow in the summer of 2004.

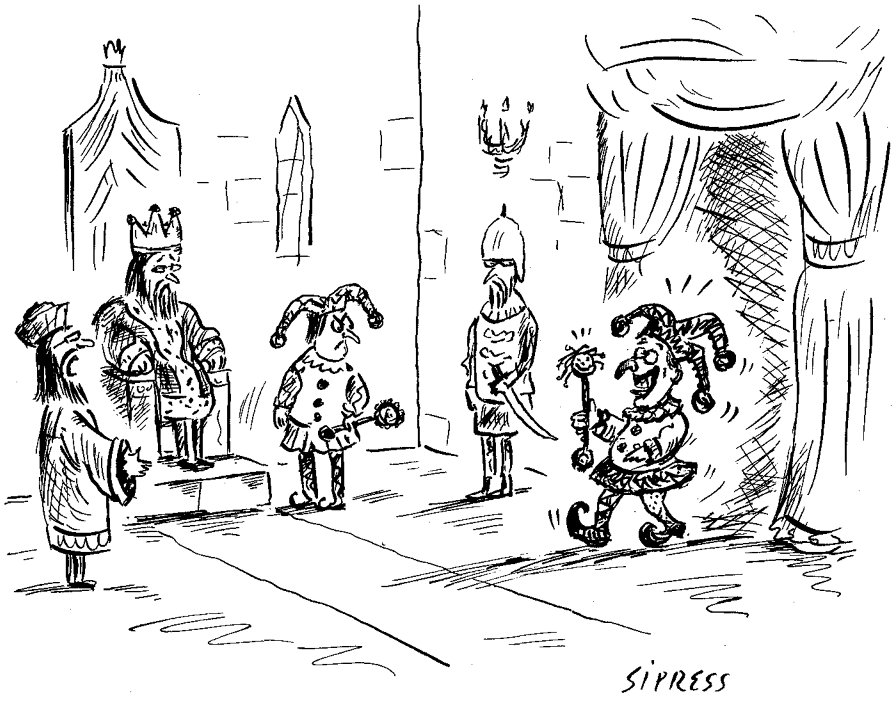
Lorrie Moore (Fiction, p. 76) has published two novels and three collections of short stories, including “Birds of America” and “Like Life.”

Seamus Heaney (Poem, p. 79) received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995. His latest book is “The Burial at Thebes: A Version of Sophocles’ Antigone.”

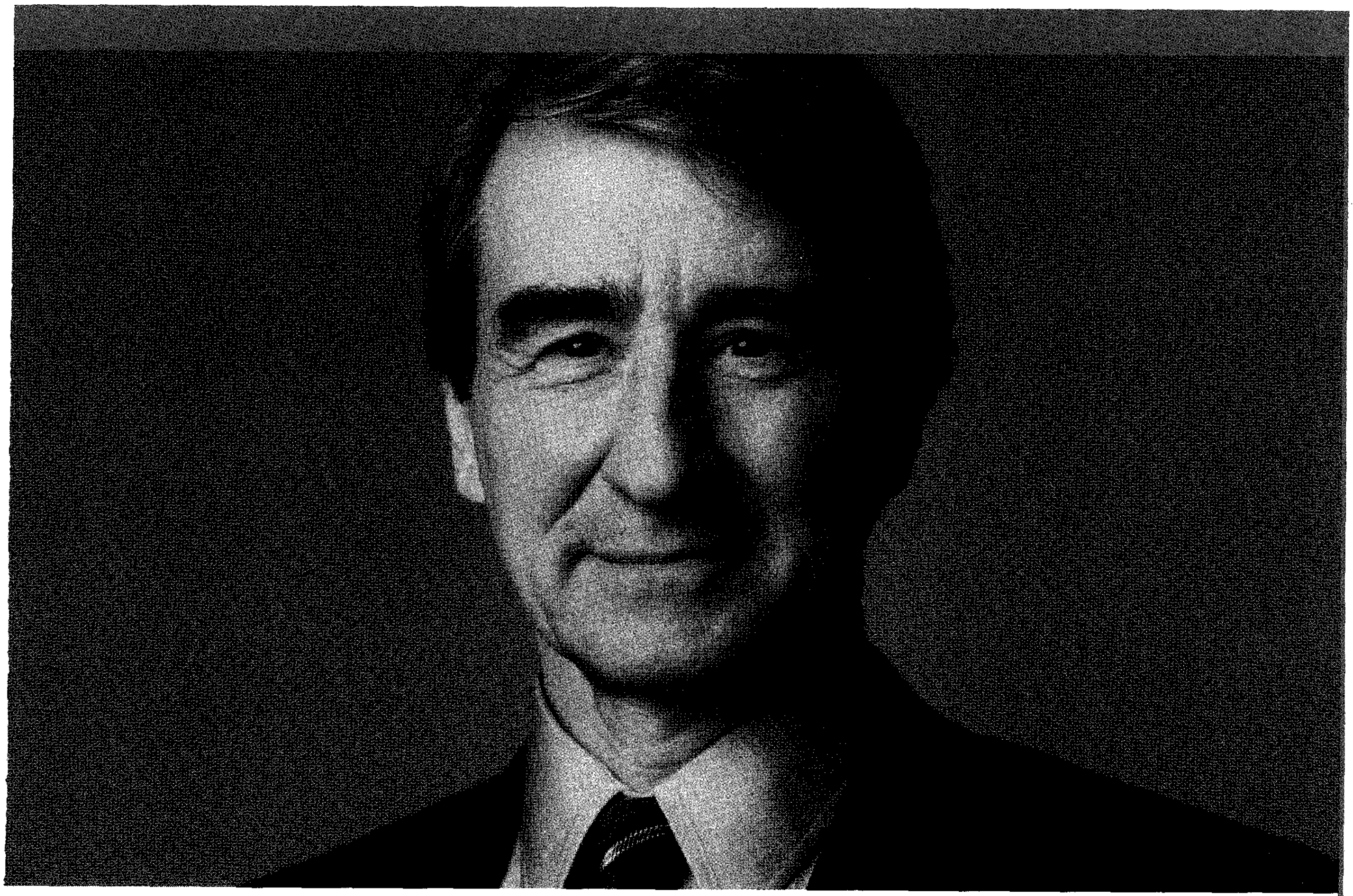
Adam Gopnik (Books, p. 82) is the author of “Paris to the Moon” and the editor of “Americans in Paris.”

Hilton Als (Books, p. 87), a staff writer, has just completed a Holtzbrinck fellowship at the American Academy in Berlin.

Art Spiegelman (The Back Page, p. 98) is working on a book of comics entitled “Breakdowns and Beyond.” His most recent book is “In the Shadow of No Towers.” ♦



“May I suggest we up your medication, sire.”



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THE MAIL

AUCTIONING HOLMES

Richard Lancelyn Green's death was a colossal loss to Sherlockians worldwide, and David Grann's sketch of his life and work was a welcome tribute ("Mysterious Circumstances," December 13th). But, to friends, colleagues, and fellow-collectors, Richard's death is even more perplexing and ironic than might be apparent. The Christie's auction of part of the Doyle archive, which may have been the precipitating event in Richard's death, was apparently devastating to him because he feared that scholarly access might be compromised were the material to leave Britain or to enter private hands. In reality, the sale posed little threat to scholarly work or accessibility.

First, during the auction preview at Christie's, virtually anyone was welcome to view every word, sketch, and object. Second, the eventual result of the auction decisively undercut Richard's concerns. I believe that many of the non-Sherlockian items were "bought in" or purchased by institutions in the U.K. Much of the cache's important Sherlockian material, meanwhile, went to two American collectors, Constantine Rossakis and me. We both counted ourselves among Richard's friends and we both helped in his bibliographic researches. Most important, we take our custodial responsibilities as collectors very seriously. We go out of our way to make our holdings accessible, by inviting visits, responding to inquiries, and sharing photocopies. Richard was always welcome. Indeed, he and I had exchanged a number of visits.

Ultimately, all theories about Richard's death are likely to be inconclusive. What is certain is that Richard was the greatest of Doyle scholars, and the Sherlockian world is diminished by his death.

Glen S. Miranker
San Francisco, Calif.

GIFTS FOR TEACHERS

I was interested to read Caitlin Flanagan's article on the practice of expensive holiday gift-giving at California schools, in the light of my own experience teaching in California ("What Teachers Want," December 6th). After moving from an established East Coast independent school to a year-old West Coast school, I found myself accepting gifts that seemed "too much." One gift certificate to a local high-end mall particularly titillated me; I spent it on a beautiful Agnès B. sweater (on sale). But, when I came back to school that winter, I felt embarrassed that my student's parents had, as it were, put the shirt on my back. By contrast, another student gave me a box of handmade toffee each year, and I was able to tell her how delicious it was. However much I liked that sweater, I can't say I appreciated it any more than the toffee.

Mira Gelley
Irvine, Calif.

I have been teaching for ten years at an inner-city school in Southern California. To say that my school is poor, segregated, and struggling is an understatement, but many of the schools within five miles of mine are similar to the schools in Flanagan's article. Teachers at these schools sometimes tell me of phenomenal Christmas gifts, but I, too, am honored with gifts at the holidays. I have received handmade cards, beloved stuffed animals, and dime-store jewelry. Once, a seven-year-old girl handed me a small, used pencil pouch. Inside were three freshly picked pinecones. She beamed at me and said, "It smells like Christmas." Maybe a seven-hundred-dollar gift certificate is an appropriate gift for a teacher, but it seems a comparatively empty satisfaction.

Susan Moise
San Marcos, Calif.

•

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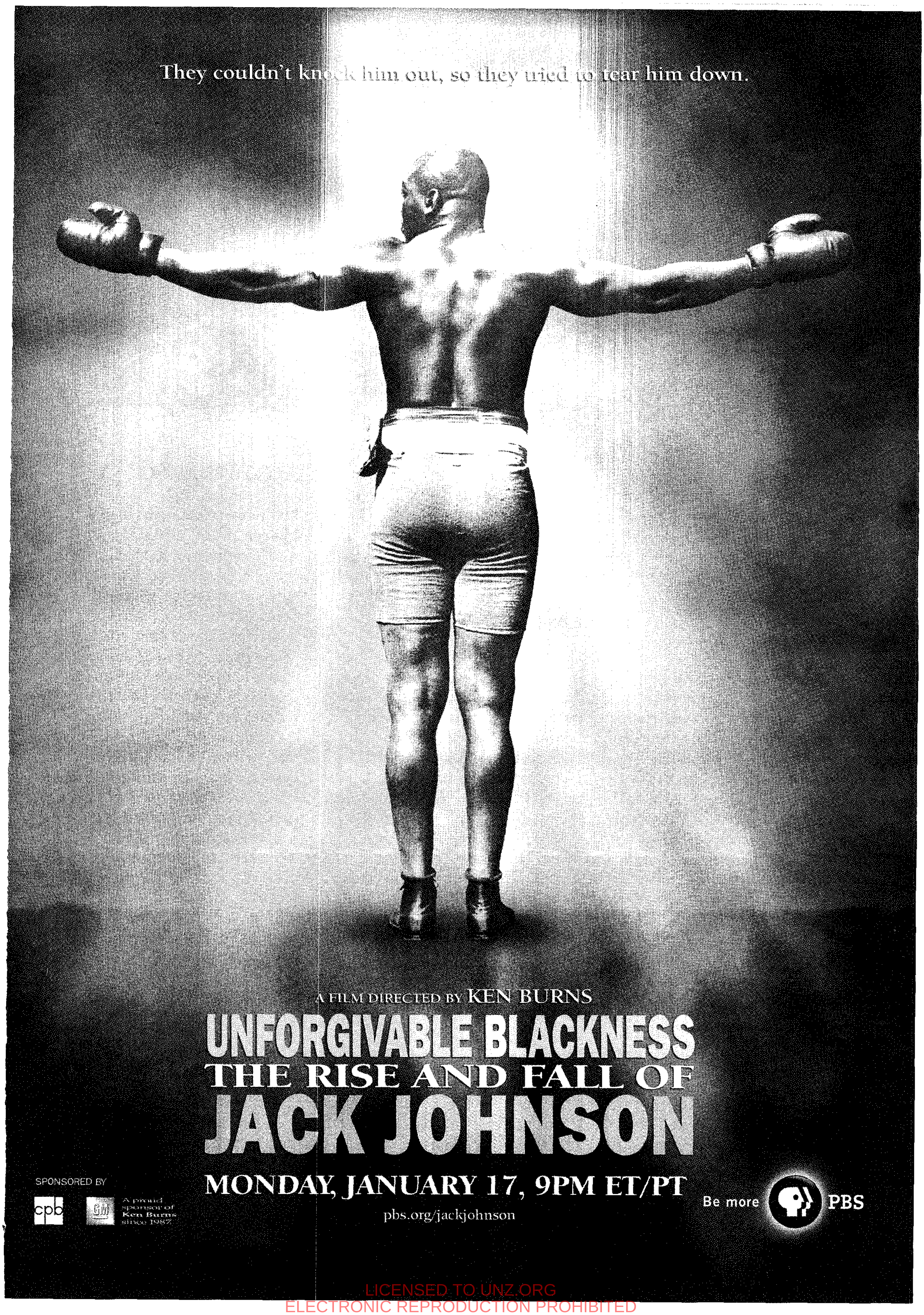

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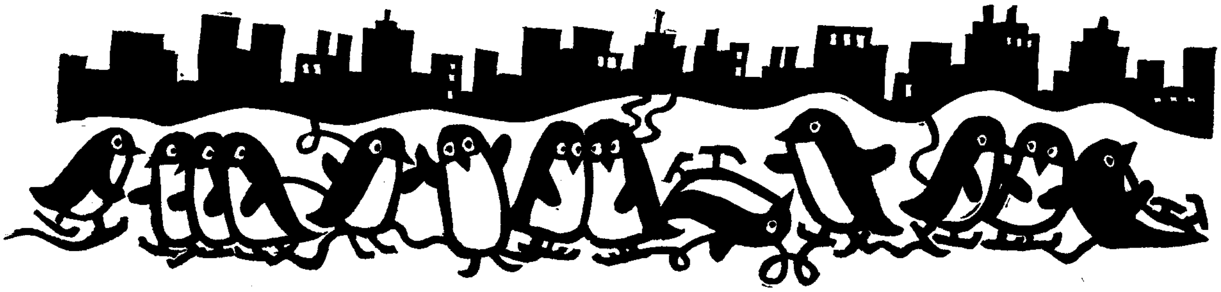

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For expanded events listings, please visit www.newyorker.com/goingson.

THIS WEEK

DRAWING ON RUBENS

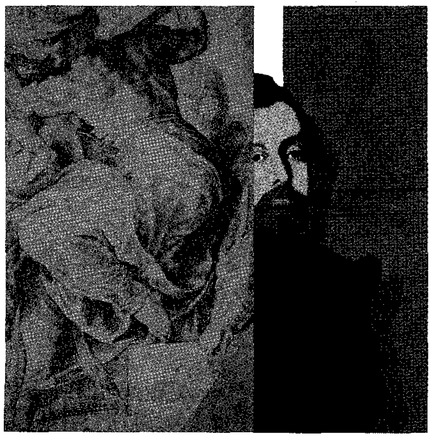
The Flemish painter-scholar Peter Paul Rubens embodied the early-seventeenth-century baroque, creating blossoming, crowded scenes from myth and history. Even when he limited himself to a single figure for portraits, the canvases still look ready to burst with forms and color. His extravagant paintings were prefigured by drawings that mapped out his swirling compositions. The Met has gathered a hundred and fifteen of the Master's drawings into a new show, the largest exhibition of its kind yet presented in the United States. Included will be preparatory drawings, figure studies, portraits, landscapes, and designs for woodcuts. (Opens Jan. 15; see Art.)

CALIFORNIA SCHEMING

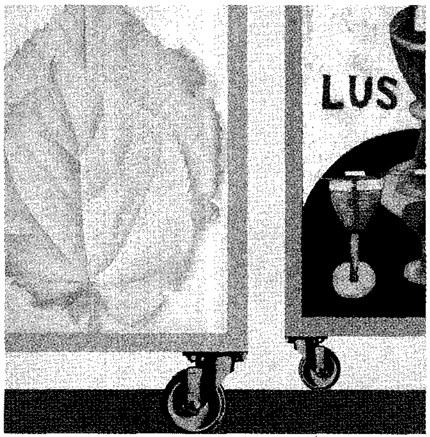
"Hurlyburly," David Rabe's hyperverbal play about self-involved Los Angeles machers and their tense relationships with women, was a Broadway hit during the coke-jittery eighties. The show was eventually made into a movie in 1997, and screen stars remain at the heart of the New Group's revival—the cast of the production includes Ethan Hawke, Catherine Kellner, Parker Posey, and Wallace Shawn. (Theatre Row; see Theatre.)

SEEING IS BELIEVING

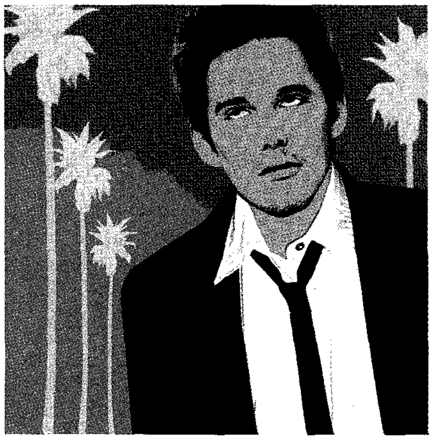
Like most museums, the Brooklyn Museum of Art can display only a small percentage of its holdings at a time, thus consigning vast numbers of works to storage—including significant American paintings and sculptures, decorative arts, and Native American and Spanish colonial pieces. The new Luce Visible Storage/Study Center will remedy the situation, with five thousand square feet of tightly packed displays that put more than fifteen hundred items on view. There are rolling racks covered in paintings and drawings, stacked glass cases filled with sculptures and artifacts, and a computer-equipped kiosk to aid in locating the *objets.* (Opens Jan. 14; see Art.)



The drawings of Peter Paul Rubens, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

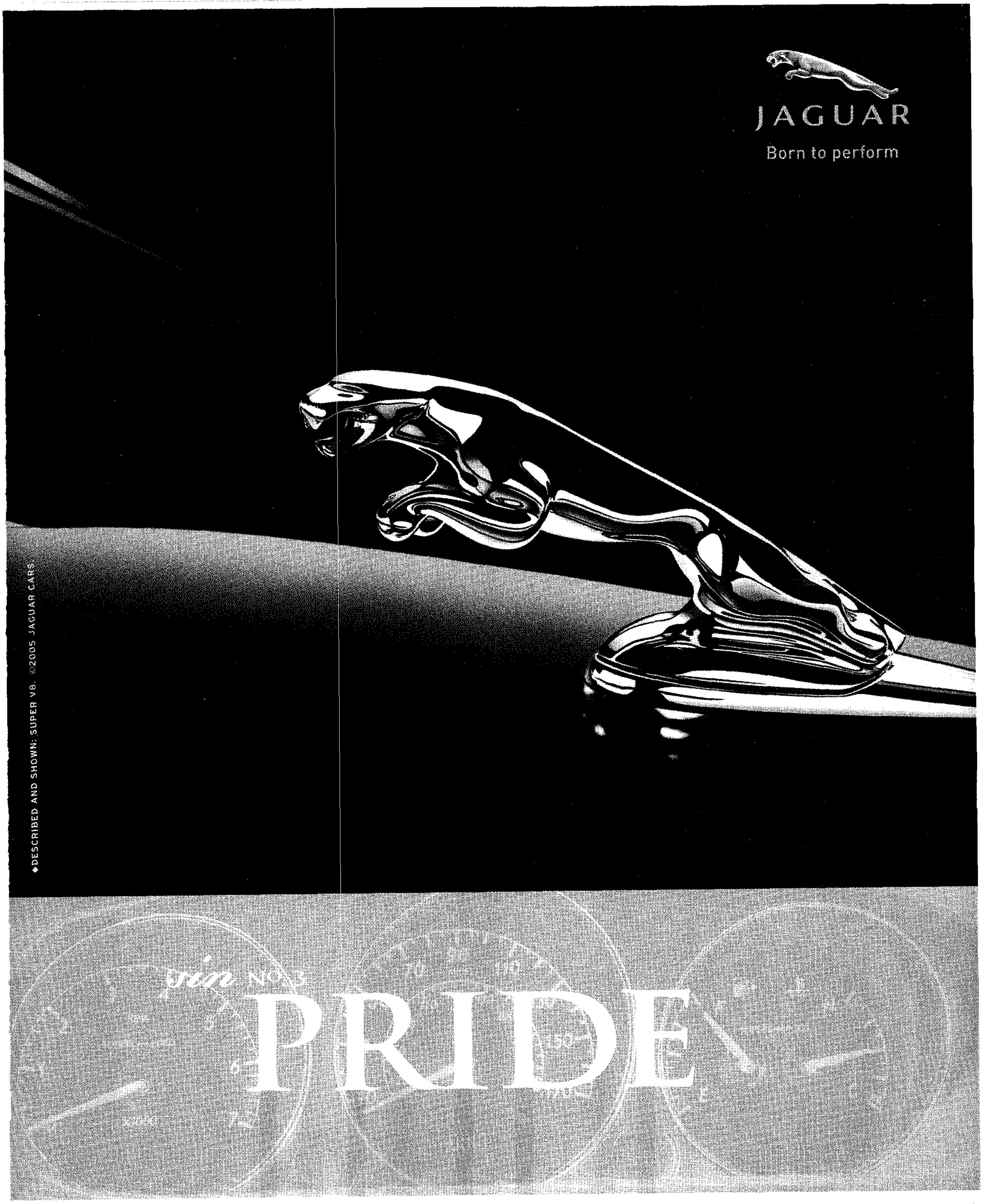


The new Luce Visible Storage/Study Center opens at the Brooklyn Museum.



JOHN RITTER

David Rabe's L.A. play "Hurlyburly," in revival with Ethan Hawke.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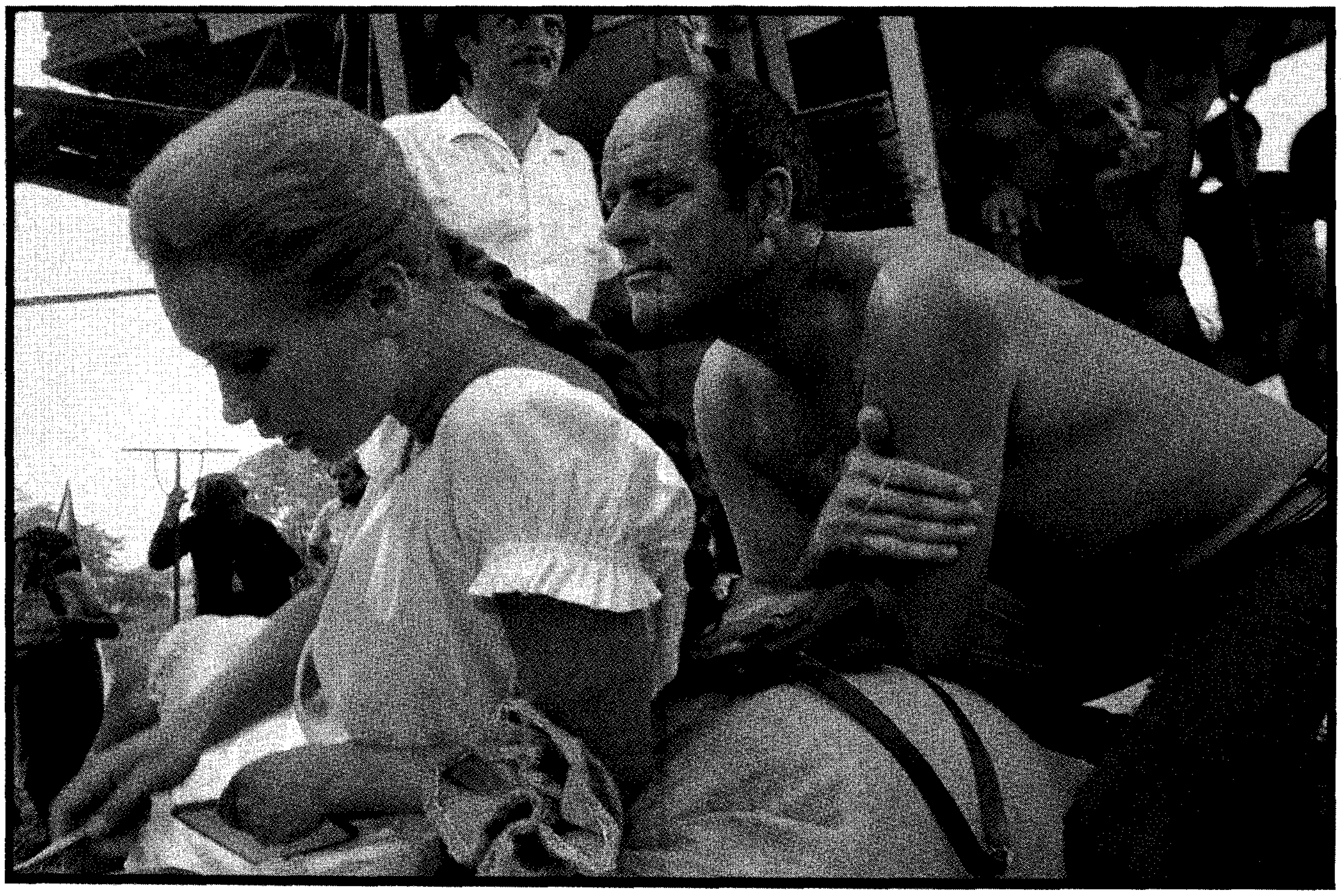
AS YOU LIKE IT
In his début appearance at BAM, Sir Peter Hall directs Theatre Royal Bath in a production of Shakespeare's comedy that stars his daughter Rebecca Hall as Rosalind. Opens Jan. 18 at 7:30. Through Jan. 30. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100.)

BELFAST BLUES
The actress Geraldine Hughes has turned her childhood memories of war-torn Belfast into an award-winning play, in which she plays two dozen characters. In previews. (Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)



"Udvaros, Dorottya, 'Te Rongyos Élet,' Hungary," from 1983, by Sylvia Plachy, at Hunter/Fox (see Photography).

BROOKLYN BOY
Manhattan Theatre Club presents a new play by Donald Margulies ("Dinner with Friends"), about a writer whose character is changed by success. Adam Arkin and Polly Draper lead the cast. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. Previews begin Jan. 13. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

DIRTY WORKS
The British theatre company Stiff Upper Lip returns to New York with a dark comedy by Jamie Linley about drug-abusing Londoners. Directed by Kevin Kittle. Jan. 12-30. (Greenwich Street Theatre, 547 Greenwich St. 212-352-3101.)

THE GODS ARE POUNDING MY HEAD! (LUMBERJACK MESSIAHS)
Richard Foreman's newest metaphysical dramatic effort stars the Ontological Theatre veterans Jay Smith and T. Ryder Smith and the newcomer Charlotta Mohlin. In previews. Opens Jan. 18 at 8. (Note: All shows start promptly; latecomers will not be admitted.) (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-533-4650.)

GOOD VIBRATIONS
More than thirty songs by Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys form the backdrop for this musical, about a group of East Coast teen-agers who head to California in search of surf and sun. Directed and choreographed by John Carrafa. In previews. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA
The Pearl Theatre Company presents Federico García Lorca's drama about a widow whose mourning ruins the lives of her daughters. Directed by Shepard Sobel. In previews. Opens Jan. 16 at 7. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

HURLYBURLY
A revival of David Rabe's 1984 play, presented by the New Group. Directed by Scott Elliott. In previews (see This Week). (Theatre Row, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

LITTLE WOMEN
Sutton Foster is Jo and Maureen McGovern is Marmee, in a new musical inspired by Louisa May Alcott's novel about four sisters of the Civil War era. Book by Alan Knee, lyrics by Mindi Dickstein, and music by Jason Howland. Directed by Susan H. Schulman. In previews. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE
A new musical by William Finn ("Falsettos") and Rachel Sheinkin sets the travails of six young orthographic geniuses and their anxious adult entourages to music. Directed by James Lapine. In previews. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

OPENED RECENTLY

BELIZE
The Obie-winning company the Talking Band presents a new musical, set in Belize and England in the eighteenth century, about a romance between an Irish-born colonel and a half-African woman he meets in the colonies. Written and directed by Paul Zimet, with music by Ellen Maddow. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710.)

CULTUREMART
HERE, the multidisciplinary downtown arts center, presents its annual festival of works by artists-in-residence. Highlights include a puppet musical version of "Alice in Wonderland," by the rising puppeteer Lake Simons; the image-driven theatre piece "Phenomenon," by Alyse Rothman; "Café Antarsia," an opera set in a mythic taverna on Crete; and Freefall's physical-theatre piece "Clever Hans." (145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444. Through Jan. 16.)

DEMOCRACY
A strong production of Michael Frayn's play about the popular German Chancellor Willy Brandt (James Naughton) and the East German mole Günter Guillaume (Richard Thomas), who served him and eventually sank him. Directed by Michael Blakemore. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

DOUBT
John Patrick Shanley's well-told tale about possible sexual abuse in a Catholic school pits a battle-axe mother superior against a popular priest. The cast is superb—the rebarbative Cherry Jones dukes it out with a charismatic Brían F. O'Byrne while Heather Goldenhersh tempers the simmering cauldron of ill will with her fetching sweetness. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/13/04.) (Manhattan Theatre Club at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Through Jan. 30.)

FAT PIG
The leads of Neil LaBute's new play are Tom (the excellent Jeremy Piven), a successful executive who is neat, careful, well-spoken, charmingly average and conformist, and Helen (the compelling Ashlie Atkinson), a librarian who weighs in the neighborhood of two hundred and fifty pounds. When the two of them meet at a restaurant, there is a rapport. Tom gets her number. Helen leaves. Then, in the sort of theatrical choice that makes LaBute such a fascinating writer, Helen returns to speak her heart.

"Please do not let yourself be afraid of me or of taking some kind of blind chance, or what people think," she tells him. "Because this could be so great." Helen acts on her desires. But Tom, we learn, is one of those stuck adolescent souls who play life not to win but to not lose. Directed by Jo Bonney. (1/3/05) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200. Through Feb. 5.)

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF
"Tradition" gets a wild new spin as Harvey Fierstein takes over the role of Tevye in David Leveaux's production of the classic musical, based on stories by Sholom Aleichem. (Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100.)

FRANKENSTEIN
Mary Shelley's horror story is adapted by the Flying Machine, in a multimedia production directed by Joshua Carlbach. (SoHo Rep, 46 Walker St. 212-868-7444. Through Jan. 16.)

GEM OF THE OCEAN
Set in the Hill District of Pittsburgh in 1904, "Gem" is the latest, and the introductory, installment of August Wilson's magnificent ten-play cycle, in which each play dramatizes a decade of the roiling African-American experience of the twentieth century. With John Earl Jelks as Citizen Barlow, a young man born into freedom and named for its promise, and Phylicia Rashad as Aunt Ester Tyler, a two-hundred-and-eighty-five-year-old conjure woman who is the repository of the race's historical memory. Well directed by Kenny Leon. (12/20 & 27/04) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

HAROLD & MAUDE: THE MUSICAL
Estelle Parsons is Maude and Eric Millegan is Harold, in a musical adaptation of Colin Higgins's 1971 cult film (directed by Hal Ashby), about a romance between a young man and an eighty-year-old woman. Book and lyrics by Tom Jones ("The Fantasticks") and music by Joseph Thalken. Directed by Mark S. Hoebee. (Paper Mill Playhouse, Brookside Dr., Millburn, N.J. 973-376-4343.)

K.I. FROM "CRIME"
The Russian director Kama Ginkas makes his New York début with his adaptation of Dostoyevsky's "Crime and Punishment." Presented by the Foundry Theatre, with the Baryshnikov Dance Foundation and Chashama. (Freight Entrance Theatre, 208 W. 37th St. 212-864-4444.)

A NUMBER
Sam Shepard, seated at one end of a leather couch, undergoes a series of awkward confrontations with a number of his cloned offspring (all played with haunting credibility and both subtle and unsubtle differences by Dallas Roberts). The production's appeal has more to do with the gravitational pull of Shepard's charisma and the nuanced neediness Roberts projects (in each incarnation) than with Caryl Churchill's writing, which feels both spare and repetitive—less like a play than a series of variations on one thesis. Arliss Howard replaces Shepard on Jan. 18. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. Through Feb. 13.)

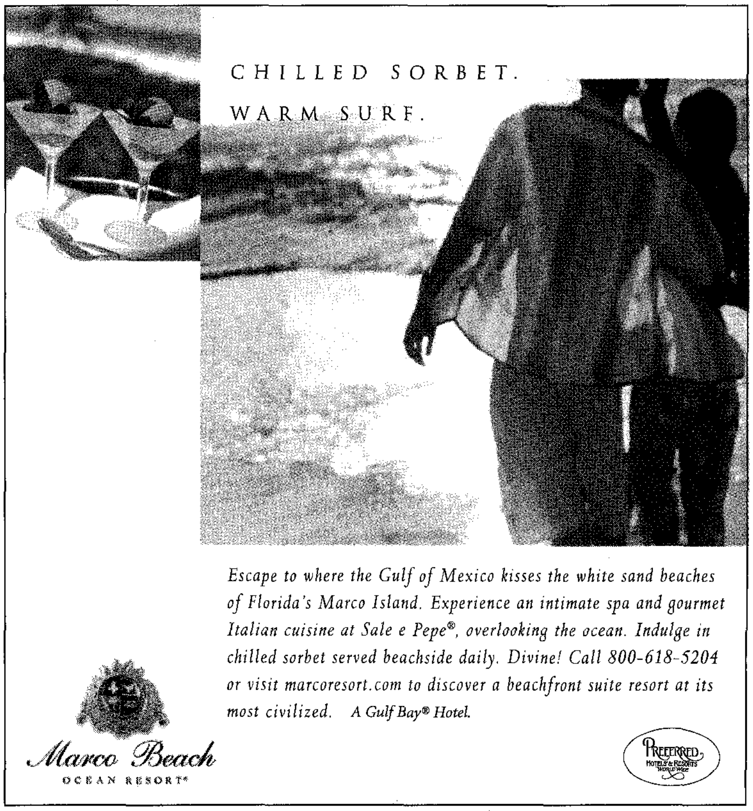
THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE
The New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players present the operetta in the year of its hundred-and-twenty-fifth anniversary. Hal Linden stars. Directed by Albert Bergeret. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Through Jan. 23.)

THE RIVALS
Richard Brinsley Sheridan's featherlight comedy about headstrong heirs and heiresses and their foolish guardians receives a sparkling production at Lincoln Center. John Lee Beatty's set of eighteenth-century Bath is uncommonly well realized, and its authentic flavor is aided by Jess Goldstein's richly hued, intricate costumes—particularly the gowns worn by Lydia Languish (played with willful charm by Emily Bergl) and by the bossy, language-mangling Mrs. Malaprop (the divine Dana Ivey). Of the many fine men in the cast, Matt Letscher, as Lydia's devoted, tormented suitor, stands out for his manly vivacity. Directed by Mark Lamos. (Vivian Beaumont. 212-239-6200. Through Jan. 23.)

700 SUNDAYS
Billy Crystal's Broadway début, an affectionate memoir of his boyhood on Long Island, centers on his father, who managed a jazz-record shop and died of a heart attack when Crystal was fifteen. The show is a kind of "It's a Wonderful Yiddishe Life"—tender and funny, it brings together physical comedy, home movies, and nostalgic music. Written by Crystal, with additional material by Alan Zweibel. Directed by Des McAnuff. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

ALSO PLAYING

AFTER THE BALL
Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.
AGA-BOOM
New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.
Through Jan. 16.
AVENUE Q
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St.
212-307-4747.
BROOKLYN: THE MUSICAL
Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.
BUG
Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St.
212-239-6200. (Closes Jan. 30.)
LA CAGE AUX FOLLES
Marquis, Broadway at 46th St. 212-307-4100.
CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St.
212-239-6200.
DAME EDNA: BACK WITH A VENGEANCE!
Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.
THE FOREIGNER
Roundabout at Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St.
212-719-1300.
HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.
JEWTOPIA
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.
LONE STAR LOVE
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St.
212-239-6200.
MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St.
212-563-5544.
MODERN ORTHODOX
Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.
MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St.
212-307-4100.
NEWSICAL
Upstairs at Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St.
212-307-4100.
9 PARTS OF DESIRE
Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St.
212-239-6200.
PACIFIC OVERTURES
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St.
212-719-1300. (Closes Jan. 30.)
THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
A SECOND HAND MEMORY
Atlantic, 33 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.
(Closes Jan. 23.)
SLAVA'S SNOWSHOW
Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St.
212-505-0700.
THEY ALL KNEW
Wings, 154 Christopher St. 212-627-2961.
(Through Jan. 22.)
TWELVE ANGRY MEN
American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St.
212-719-1300.
WHOOPI
Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.
(Closes Jan. 30.)
WICKED
Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.
WONDERFUL TOWN
Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.
(Closes Jan. 30.)



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DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
The second week of the season includes three performances of Peter Martins's new production of "Todo Buenos Aires," set to a fresh arrangement of tangos by Astor Piazzolla and featuring the guest artist Julio Bocca. ♦ Jan. 11 at 7:30: "Ballo Della Regina," "Todo Buenos Aires," and "Musagète." ♦ Jan. 12 at 8 (an all-Balanchine program): "Square Dance," "Stravinsky Violin Concerto," and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." ♦ Jan. 13 at 8: "Square Dance," "Stabat Mater," and "I'm Old Fashioned." ♦ Jan. 14 at 8: "La Source," "Todo Buenos Aires," and "Carnival of the Animals." ♦ Jan. 15 at 2: "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3," "Polyphonia," and "I'm Old Fashioned." ♦ Jan. 15 at 8: "Divertimento No. 15," "Stabat Mater," and "Carnival of the Animals." ♦ Jan. 16 at 3: "The Four Temperaments," "Todo Buenos Aires," and "Carnival of the Animals." ♦ Jan. 18 at 7:30: "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3," "Stravinsky Violin Concerto," and "Carnival of the Animals." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through Feb. 27.)

"CLASSICAL SAVION"
In his season at the Joyce a year ago, Savion Glover was full of surprises. Usually introverted, he let loose his charm and found a natural, uningratiating way to share his joy in tap dancing. He even sang a little. Returning to the Chelsea theatre, Glover has found a new way to freshen his art, dancing solo to music by Stravinsky, Bach, and other classical composers, performed live by a chamber ensemble. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Jan. 11-14 at 8, Jan. 15 at 2 and 8, and Jan. 16 at 2 and 7:30. Through Jan. 23.)

WALLY CARDONA QUARTET
For his new evening-length work, "Him, There, Them," Cardona has created a geometric world of white cubes and rectangles and vivid-green squares of grass. The dancers who inhabit this alien setting seem both artificial and real, maintaining a smoothness of motion, sensual yet sterile, that conceals underlying tensions. Cardona choreographs repeated, feverish motions and breaks them up with percussive thumps that draw the viewer's eye to the sharp angle of a bone. With live performances by snare drummers and the pianist Koji Attwood and an original electronic score by Romulo Gaitan. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Jan. 10 at 8 and Jan. 11 and Jan. 13-15 at 7:30.)

"BEACON"
Set in the harshly lit recesses of a former bathhouse, the new work by Yanira Castro + Company inhabits a netherworld of phosphorescent-green glass pillars, bare walls, and cacophonous strings. The movement is rough and angular: a woman jerks her way to an unsteady balance; dancers drag themselves across the floor by their elbows. The underlying lethargy is jolted by seizurelike motions, flashes of skin, and text excerpts from Aeschylus' "The Libation Bearers." With original music by Dan Siegler. (Brooklyn Lyceum, 227 Fourth Ave., Park Slope. For tickets, call 212-924-0077. Jan. 14-15 at 7 and 9 and Jan. 16 at 6. Through Jan. 23.)

DANCE ON CAMERA FESTIVAL
The highlight of the festival's second week is Victor Bocharov's "Belated Première," a documentary about the Russian character dancer Alexander Shirayev (1867-1941), which unearths intricate puppet shows, photos, and animated drawings Shirayev made to record roles he created for Marius Petipa at the Mariinsky Theatre. The film is presented with "Russian Dreams," one episode of an irreverent contemporary animated serial. The week also features a retrospective of dance shorts supported by the Canadian cultural foundation Bravo!FACT (one is a danced interpretation of poetry by Michael Ondaatje). (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-875-5600. For a complete schedule, visit www.filmlinc.com. Through Jan. 22.)

"PARALLAX"
A Merce Cunningham influence frequently appears in Anita Cheng's intelligent choreography—as does the Master's name in her dancers' bios—but it's most visible in her work with video. The new show by Anita Cheng Dance includes a quartet in which dancers are immersed in images from a video installation by Ronaldo Kiel, which is projected onto three walls of a white-box set. The evening also features a new solo built on ten short video segments taken from a visual diary that Cheng and Kiel recorded in 2000. Dances are accompanied by live music: Lisa Bielawa sings over a recording of her own voice, part of Gordon Beeferman's experimental score for the quartet, and a new version of last year's "Field Continuum" features a structured improvisation by the percussionist Jeff Arnal. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. Jan. 13-16 at 8.)

TABLES FOR TWO

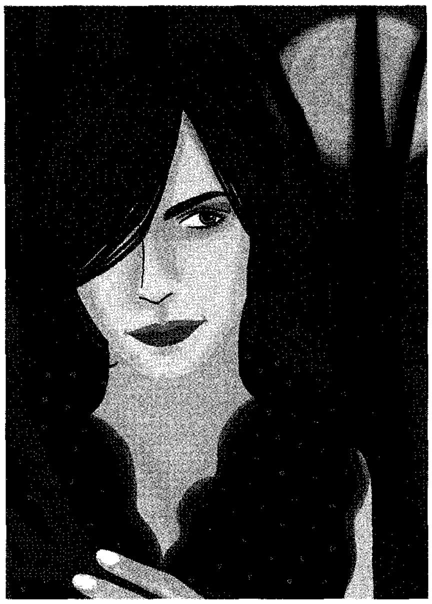
DINOSAUR BAR-B-QUE
646 W. 131st St. (212-694-1777)—It's hard to tell what excites barbecue geeks more whenever a new barbecue joint comes to town: the prospect of smoked meat or the chance to argue about it. The latest arrival is Dinosaur Bar-B-Que, newly installed under the trestle of the Riverside Drive Viaduct in a decreasingly forsaken light-industrial flank of Harlem. The original Dinosaur was founded in Syracuse seventeen years ago by three bikers who had spent the previous half-decade hauling an oil-drum smoker to festivals and motorcycle shows. That one is reportedly a raucous place, cluttered with biker things. The Manhattan incarnation, wood-beamed and warehouse-size, seems more studied, as though designed by someone with a barbecue degree: a hand-painted sign over the bar reads "Comfort Station," and after just a month the men's-room walls are thick with graffiti, as though the owners had spent an evening marking them up.

Of course, no one who cares about smoked meat cares about such matters. It helps, when facing hostile barbecue debates, to dine with an expert, especially an expert who denies that he is one. At lunch the other day, a well-travelled finger-licker consented to mumble some criticisms. First, Dinosaur's Carolina pulled-pork sandwich is really a Memphis pulled-pork sandwich (not enough vinegar). Second, he said, "they don't respect the pork." The same could be said for the beef brisket, which was gyro-tough. His theory was that in a quest for authenticity Dinosaur had erred on the side of blandness, skimping on sauces and spices. The others at the table agreed and found the chicken (the dark meat) and the ribs (pork) smokier and more to their liking. One diner observed that the corn bread, with a sugary glaze, tasted a little like Alpha-Bits, and another discovered, heretically, that pretty much every kind of meat at the table could be improved by dipping it in the melted "Cajun garlic butter" (seasoned with "Cajun foreplay") that came with a side order of salt potatoes. The heretic's pronouncement on the chili, which tasted great but had the consistency of spaghetti sauce, hinted at a consensus: "There aren't enough solid things in it." (Open Tuesdays through Sundays for lunch and dinner. Entrées $5-$22.50.)

—*Nick Paumgarten*

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Merita Halili, a Tiranë-born singer whose sparkling renditions of Albanian folk songs brought her to stardom before she emigrated to New Jersey, a decade ago, and her accordion-wielding husband, Raif Hyseni, can most often be found performing at local Albanian restaurants and weddings; those outside the community have a chance to catch them at Symphony Space. (Broadway at 95th St. For more information, call 212-545-7536. Jan. 15 at 8.)



The singer Ambrosia Parsley and her band, Shivaree, descend upon Joe's Pub.

DIVYA SRINIVASAN

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—Mondays in January: The local ensemble **Las Rubias del Norte** rearranges Latin big-band music for a handful of instruments, including the glockenspiel. They mix boleros, cha-cha-cha, and cumbias with lieder and cowboy songs, held together by the captivating vocals of the two lead singers, Emily Hurst and Allyssa Lamb, veterans of the New York Choral Society.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Jan. 13: **Allan Holdsworth,** a British guitarist whose trailblazing style has enhanced recordings from bands as diverse as the prog-rock freaks Gong to the fusion-jazz popsters Level 42. Jan. 14: **Mountain,** known for high-volume, bluesy rock and the song "Mississippi Queen." This incarnation includes the guitar gunslinger Richie Scarlett, formerly of Frehley's Comet. Jan: 17: The soulful vocalist **Bobby (Blue) Bland** celebrates his seventy-fifth birthday. Jan. 18: Over the last decade, the **Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black** has scared the wits out of audiences with its psychosexually depraved shock rock. It has a bare-bones aesthetic (the band practices what it calls "availabism," which, long before Donald Rumsfeld thought of it, meant to make the best of what's available) and a flair for absurdist theatre.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Jan. 12: The Canadian twin sisters **Tegan and Sara** have built-in novelty appeal, but they also have above-average songwriting skills that elevate their snappy pop. Jan. 13: **Razorlight,** a new band from London, has English, Swedish, and American members, and its influences include the raw energy of the Clash, the dirty grit of Lou Reed, and the insouciance of the Strokes.

CHURCH LOUNGE
Tribeca Grand Hotel, 2 Sixth Ave., at White St. (212-519-6600)—Jan. 15: The **Kaiser Chiefs** are the latest U.K. outfit to follow in the grand tradition of Franz Ferdinand, the Futureheads, and the Libertines by sending English record buyers and music journalists into a sweaty frenzy. In its short history, the Leeds five-piece has charted with two singles of ripe guitar pop, "Oh My God" and "I Predict a Riot," and the group's front man, Ricky Wilson, has been compared to Johnny Rotten and Damon Albarn.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Jan. 18: **Shivaree.** On its new release, "Who's Got Trouble?," this trio, fronted by the singer Ambrosia Parsley, conjures an atmosphere of late-night glances, touching heartaches, and foolishly dangerous moves. In concert, they're a welcoming ensemble who eagerly invite you into their dark world. Later that night: **Mary Gauthier** takes the stage with songs from her forthcoming Lost Highway release, "Mercy Now." This Thibodaux, Louisiana, native was fifteen when she quit high school and ran away from home. Her strange life has taken her from a detox center in Baton Rouge to ownership of a restaurant in Boston. A few years ago she embraced music as a full-time occupation, and her country noir proudly displays her rough edges and hard-earned experience.

LIVING ROOM
154 Ludlow St. (212-533-7235)—Jan. 18: **Alice Texas** is Alice Schneider, a native New Yorker who rides through the oppressively small towns and dry prairies of her imagination searching for love and redemption. Her sidekicks tonight are the guitarist Peter Mavrogeorgis and the drummer and bassist Greg Gonzalez. Also that night: **Dayna Kurtz,** a criminally overlooked local singer whose most recent album, "Beautiful Yesterday," slows the world to the point where even melancholy becomes beautiful. Monday nights: **Jim Campilongo** holds court. American music is a melting pot of influences, but few guitarists capture the nuances as well as Campilongo, who lays down country licks next to blues lines and jazz riffs with virtuosity.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Jan. 12: The progressive dance rock of the Washington, D.C., band **Morel,** the glamorous guitar work of **Tiger Mountain,** and the sexy vocals of **Muffy Nixon.** Jan. 13: The **Jimmy Chamberlin Complex.** The former Smashing Pumpkins and Zwan drummer gets his own group, and it isn't pretty, unless indulgent prog rock is to your taste. Jan. 14: The **National,** a band composed of two sets of brothers and a friend who left their native Ohio and moved to Brooklyn, carries on in the vein of the great Midwestern indie rockers Guided by Voices, with a touch of the requisite East Coast angst. Also on the bill are the power-pop-friendly girls of **Palomar** and the angular stylings of the literate lads in **Serious Weapon.**

SATALLA
37 W. 26th St. (212-576-1155)—Jan. 14: The Uilleann-pipes player **Paddy Keenan.** Jan. 16: **Lil' Malcolm and the House Rockers** serve up top-shelf dance music from southwestern Louisiana, and today they're serving it early—this show starts at 1 P.M.

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—Jan. 13: **Antibalas.** Their name is Spanish for "bulletproof," and their music, which takes inspiration from the Nigerian legend Fela Kuti, is equally invincible. Jan. 16: The San Francisco-based soul rocker **Martin Luther** was raised on gospel music, but the sounds of Parliament Funkadelic (provided in a timely fashion by an older brother) led him down his current path.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—Jan. 14: **Steve Wynn** started his career in the early eighties with the jangly guitar pop of his group the Dream Syndicate. He disbanded the ensemble at the end of that decade and has since pursued a steady solo career as a singer-songwriter. With the alt-country underdogs the **Silos.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through Jan. 15: The opera singer **Sylvia McNair** is back at the Oak Room with songs by Rodgers, Sondheim, and Arlen.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Jan. 12-15: The pianist **Bill Charlap's** superlative trio has been a model of consistency for close to a decade. This engagement finds the redoubtable **George Mraz** filling in for **Peter Washington** on bass over the last three nights.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Splitting the difference between jazz and R. & B., the keyboardist **Joe Sample,** best known for his work with the Crusaders, has been active since the late fifties. Last year's album, "Soul Shadows," was an ambitious, historically informed solo-piano recital. Sample is here with a trio through Jan. 16.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, starting Jan. 14, **Ute Lemper.** Exuding cultural sophistication, vocal daring, and unabashed sensuality, Lemper personifies smart cabaret. Her new show, "Blood and Feathers," draws on Continental favorites like Brecht and Weill and Broadway titans like Sondheim, as well as Lemper's own compositions, except on Thursday nights, when she takes "A Walk on the Weill Side."

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Through Jan. 16: **Eric Reed** is a virtuoso pianist with a sure sense of small-group dynamics. His Happiness sextet features the trumpeter **Jeremy Pelt** and the saxophonists **Myron Walden** and **Seamus Blake.**

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Jan. 13-16: The **Jimmy Smith** quartet. The Hammond organ was certainly around before the mid-fifties, when Smith started messing with it, but can anyone remember what it was used for? His influence is so pervasive that his name has become practically synonymous with the instrument. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** is here Tuesdays.

LE JAZZ AU BAR
41 E. 58th St. (212-308-9455)—Jan. 10-23: Celebrating the release of her new album, "In My Life," the West Coast singer **Wesla Whitfield** lends an elegant lustre to songs by Rodgers and Hammerstein, Lennon and McCartney, and others.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Jan. 11-13: The pianist and composer **Randy Weston's African Rhythms Trio** combines the rhythmic diversity of the African diaspora with the lyrical smarts of New York bebop. Weston's percussive energy can be bracing—this is world music that never devalues its sources. Jan. 14-16: Weston expands his African Rhythms band to a quintet, with the addition of **T. K. Blue** on alto saxophone and **Benny Powell** on trombone.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Jan. 15: The guitarist **Rez Abbasi** celebrates the release of "Snake Charmer," his new CD, in which he mixes Southeast Asian influences with fusion-inflected technique.

KNICKERBOCKER
33 University Pl., at 9th St. (212-228-8490)—Jan. 14-15: Rhythm is the unmistakable essence of the pianist **Michael Wolff's** propulsive Impure Thoughts band, whose recent album, "Dangerous Vision," features the celebrated Brazilian percussionist Airto Moreia.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—The violinist **Mat Maneri** (here with his quartet on Jan. 13) has inherited the creative temperament of his father, the legendary saxophonist Joe Maneri, as well as his obsession with microtonal improvisation.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Jan. 16: **Paul Motian** and the **Electric Bebop Band.** Having helped alter conventional jazz drumming as we know it, Motian shouldn't be expected to be reverent when it comes to playing bebop. The innovative percussionist's foray into the jazz past is usually fleshed out by two electric guitars, an electric bass, and two saxophones. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

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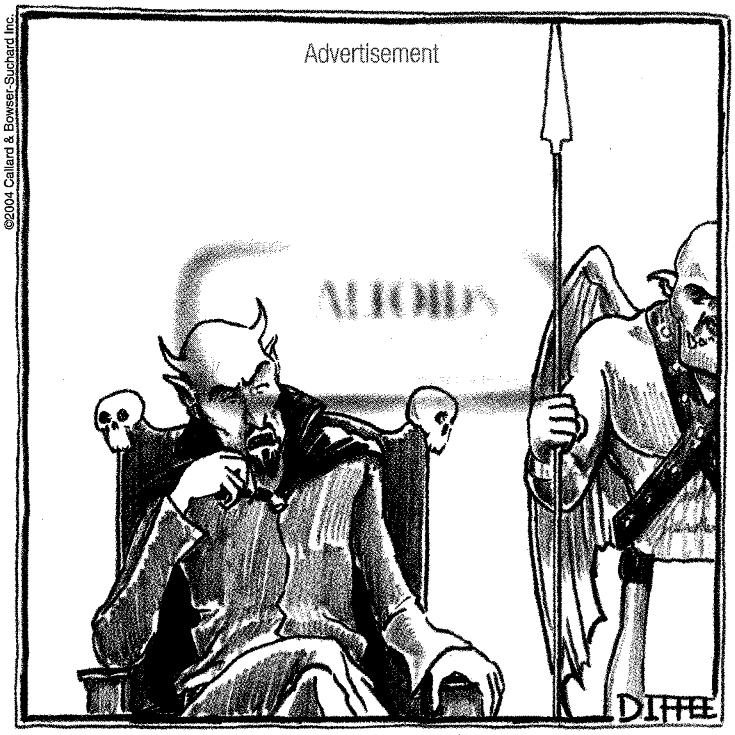

"Did it just get hotter in here?"

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—**"Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640): The Drawings"** opens Jan. 15 (see This Week). ♦ Northern Italy was a hotbed of artistic innovation at the dawn of the fourteenth century. Duccio, Giotto, and Cimabue, along with followers like Simone Martini and Pietro Lorenzetti, were revolutionizing pictorial space and humanizing their gold-leafed saints with naturalistic expressions. Both trends are illustrated in Duccio's "Madonna and Child," circa 1300, a triumphant recent acquisition for the Met. The small panel situates the Virgin behind a painted parapet, as if she shared the viewer's world. Gazing sorrowfully at the child on her lap, she lets him play with the folds of blue mantle—"like a loving mom, she knows what's in store for him," as a guard recently remarked to a visitor. Through March 13. ♦ **"Gilbert Stuart."** Through Jan. 16. ♦ **"Wild: Fashion Untamed."** Clothes and accessories derived from and inspired by animals. Through March 13. ♦ **"Art Deco Paris."** Through Feb. 6. ♦ **"All That Glitters Is Not Gold: The Art, Form, and Function of Gilt Bronze in the French Interior."** Through Feb. 20. ♦ **"Princely Splendor: The Dresden Court, 1580-1620."** Through Jan. 30. ♦ **"Romare Bearden at the Met."** Through April 6. ♦ A wealth of art and artifacts recovered from the tombs of ancient luminaries are on view in **"China: Dawn of a Golden Age, 200-750 A.D."** The exhibition begins in the waning days of the Han dynasty with items like gold filigree chimeras and a procession of bronze chariots, proceeds through the period when the Xianbei confederation of nomadic tribes came to power (hammered-gold hat ornaments, an iron vessel in the shape of a crouching animal), continues on to the Wei and Sui dynasties (beatific Buddhas, painted screens, and carved stone panels from a sarcophagus), and ends with the early years of the Tang dynasty (nested reliquaries in carved stone and gold, guardian warriors made of gilt bronze). The Silk Road's influence is evident throughout, whether in the form of Roman glass objects that travelled to the region with traders or in the Arabian- and European-style patterns that turn up in textile fragments. Through Jan. 23. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—The museum has reopened in its renovated and enlarged home and is presenting a series of exhibits related to its metamorphosis. ♦ **"Yoshio Taniguchi: Nine Museums"** celebrates the architect and his previous art-housing projects, of which the new Modern is the first outside Japan. Through Jan. 31. ♦ **"Projects 82: Mark Dion—Rescue Archaeology."** Dion excavated traces of former Rockefeller town houses and the old Dorset Hotel from beneath the sculpture garden for this site-specific project. Through March 14. ♦ **"Michael Wesely: Open Shutter at the Museum of Modern Art."** The German photographer turned his long exposure method (he has left the shutter open for as long as three years) on MOMA while it was under construction. Through mid-2005. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Fridays, 10:30 to 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"The Aztec Empire"** lines the Guggenheim's spiral with more than four hundred artifacts, from carvings depicting harvest work to implements for human sacrifice. Through Feb. 13. ♦ Among the artists represented in **"Recent Acquisitions: Contemporary Sculpture"** are Maurizio Cattelan, Robert Gober, Los Carpinteros, and Tom Friedman. Through Jan. 27. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—Born in Los Angeles, raised in Japan, and inspired by expatriate Paris in the nineteen-twenties, Isamu Noguchi (1904-88) was an artist for the dawning global age. Viewers who have ventured to the Noguchi Museum in Queens will not find their assessment transformed by the current survey, **"Isamu Noguchi: Master Sculptor."** But it does look good. From the room of "puzzle" sculptures, biomorphic shapes in wood or stone fitted together, to a stand of the famous "Akari" rice-paper lamps, from a terra-cotta portrait bust of the artist's Zen-monk uncle to another, all in chrome, of his friend Buckminster Fuller, the work is openhearted, technically pristine, masterful indeed. Through Jan. 16. ♦ **"Political Nature,"** a modest gathering of prints and drawings by Walton Ford, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Frank Moore, and Stephanie Syjuco. Through March 27. ♦ **"James Lee Byars: The Perfect Silence."** A presentation of the artist's drawings, sculptures, and installations. Through March 6. ♦ **"Bill Viola: Five Angels for the Millennium."** A large-scale video installation made in 2001. Through March 6. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Totems to Turquoise: Native North American Jewelry Arts of the Northwest and Southwest."** Through July 10. ♦ **"The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter."** Through May 30. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—The Luce Center Visible Storage/Study Center opens Jan. 14 (see This Week). ♦ **"Great Expectations: John Singer Sargent Painting Children."** Included here are scenes of beaches and birthday parties and portraits of rich society kids and the progeny of Sargent's artistic peers. The children's luminous beauty is made poignant by wall texts describing what became of them amid the next century's wars and upheaval. Through Jan. 16. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION

1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—Raphael's lush and enigmatic nude portrait, "La Fornarina," is visiting the United States for the first time ever. Through Jan. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

JEWISH MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Innovator, Activist, Healer: The Art of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis."** Through Jan. 16. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45; Thursdays, 11 to 8; and Fridays, 11 to 3.)

MUSEO DEL BARRIO

Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-831-7272)—**"Retratos: 2,000 Years of Latin American Portraits."** Through March 20. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NEUE GALERIE

1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Comic Grotesque: Wit and Mockery in German Art, 1870-1940,"** a succinct, scholarly show, is a crash course in names both big—Böcklin, Kubin, Klinger, Nolde, Grosz, Feininger, Höch, Heartfield—and little (the performer and filmmaker Karl Valentin is a real find) who infused Germanic avant-gardism with sometimes hilarious, always obstreperous ill temper. Through Feb. 14. (Open Fridays, 11 to 9, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Temporarily located in the Chelsea Museum, 556 W. 22nd St. (212-219-1222)—**"East Village USA."** Through March 19. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—**"Alexander Hamilton: The Man Who Made Modern America"** is a surprisingly flashy exhibition on the life and legacy of the Founding Father. Through Feb. 28. ♦ The centerpiece of **"Arriving in Style: Treasures of Eighteenth-Century New York"** is a fancy horse-drawn carriage used by the Beekman family of New York starting in 1771; it is one of only three such carriages to survive unaltered into modern times. Through Feb. 20. ♦ Three hundred years' worth of New York cityscapes are on view in **"Impressions of New York: Prints from the New-**

Advertisement

"All right, which one of you fiddled with the thermostat?"

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York Historical Society," allowing viewers to observe in flip-book fashion the evolution of streets, parks, and waterways. Through March 20. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

WILLIAM MERRITT CHASE
A show devoted to the Sargent contemporary's interiors and smaller, softer, more intimate portraits. Chase is more often admired for his landscapes, and there's little to see in terms of evolution here, whether of style or content. What's most evident is his pleasure in painting children and young women, especially his own family and friends or models he found at an orphanage near his Tenth Street studio; an image of two little girls playing in a formal room with a vast swath of red floor between them is one of the best here, and a portrait of his mittened daughter Dorothy is charming. The impression of a life of warm domesticity is confirmed by a collection of photographs downstairs, which show Chase with his wife, children, and dogs in cozy home scenes and studios cluttered with props. Through Jan. 29. (Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St. 212-744-2300.)

Short List

MILTON AVERY
Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 212-794-0550.
Through Jan. 29.

A. R. PENCK
Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 212-988-1623.
Through Jan. 20.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

CHARLES GARABEDIAN
Garabedian's enormous, gestural dreamscapes are populated with floating spirit nudes that suggest archetypal or mythological energies, states of harmony and longing, loneliness and peace. Their boneless, bendy forms drift along in rowboats under chilly hills or icebergs and cavort through giant waves. How you feel about it all will depend, perhaps, on your appetite for fabulous visions. Through Jan. 22. (Cuningham, 541 W. 25th St. 212-242-2772.)

"INSTINCTIVE" / HANNAH GREELY
Eight Latin-American artists and one Spaniard, selected by the photographer Mario Testino, demonstrate disparate methods and strategies; items on view include assemblages of gold chains or recycled political posters, cast-resin objects, and delicate ink drawings. The subject matter is equally diverse. The Brazilian Tiago Carneiro da Cunha refashions the Sphinx into a monkey; the Peruvian Fernando Bryce uses a series of drawings to narrate the last days of Queen Liliuokalani of Hawaii, who reluctantly ceded her throne to an expansionist U.S. government in 1897. On view concurrently is work by Greely, who builds her sculptures around meticulous handmade Budweiser bottles. Through Jan. 15. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000.)

"PRINTS, BOOKS, AND MULTIPLES"
Fifteen all-star artists contribute prints, artist's books, and multiples dating from 1963 through 2004. The minimalist legacy is foregrounded, with a suite of etchings meditating on "straight not-straight and broken lines" by Sol LeWitt (1973) and a facsimile edition of Carl Andre's cut-up poetry volume "American Drill" (1963), made by interweaving bits of found texts. One of the best items is also among the most recent: Christian Marclay's "Graffiti Composition" (2002), in which he postered Berlin walls with musical staff paper, waited for it to be scrawled over by the public, and then gathered the resulting "scores" into an artist's book. Through Jan. 15. (Cooper, 521 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105.)

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

"BREATH"
The Iranian artist Shirazeh Houshiary and her husband and collaborator, Pip Horne, have installed a white tower on the public plaza of the Battery Park Ritz-Carlton. The tower's twelve courses of ceramic bricks are set inches apart and spiral twenty feet up. Hushed prayers—Buddhist, Jewish, Islamic, Christian—emerge from the gaps between the overlapping bricks. The tower, which cannot help but evoke the World Trade Center, looks especially lovely in the Lower Manhattan dusk, and the low volume of the prayers is meant to draw the passerby to within inches, an intentionally gentle contrast to the explosiveness of religious zeal. Through March 30. (2 West St. For more information, call Creative Time, at 212-206-6674.)

GALLERIES-BROOKLYN

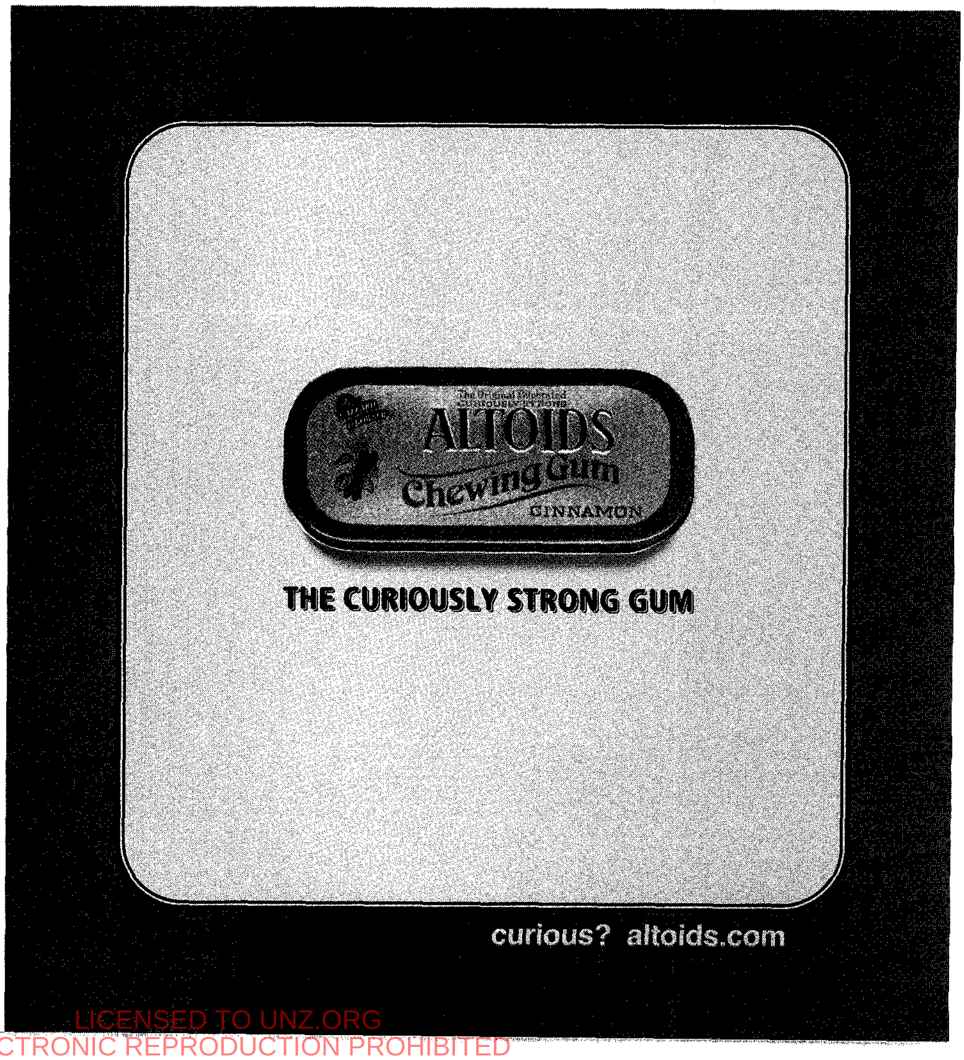
LISA DI LILLO AND SIMONE LEIGH
On a video screen, pigeons peck at what appears to be an abandoned phone. An automated voice tries to interpret their cooing but gets nowhere. This clever prank call is the work of DiLillo, who assisted the pigeons by dialing the corporate number and playing their recorded noises. DiLillo shares this two-person show with Leigh, who makes sculptures by massing together ceramic objects shaped like breasts, torpedoes, and bananas. Through Jan. 31. (Momenta, 72 Berry St. 718-218-8058.)

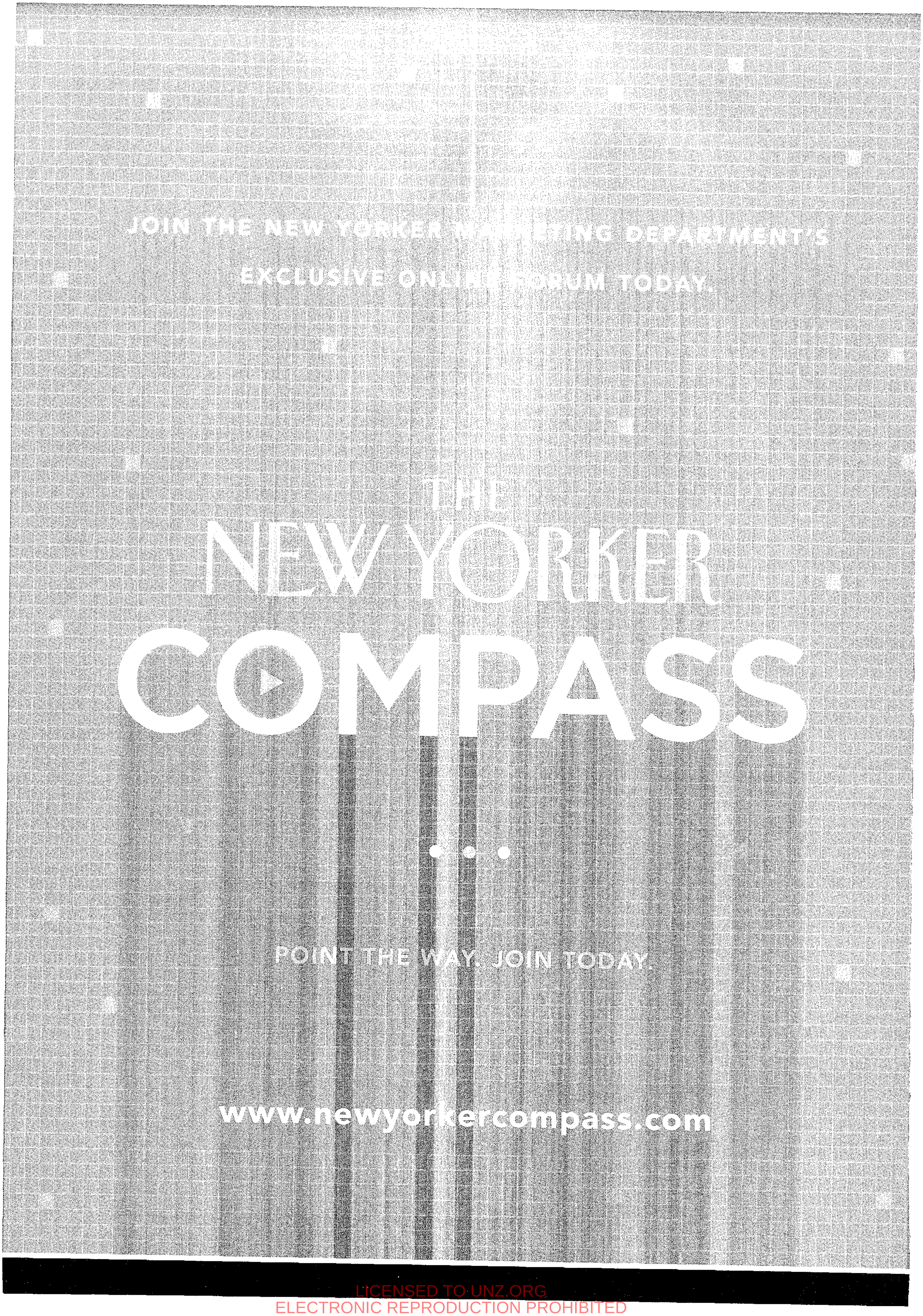
"SEMIPRECIOUS"
A pleasing collection of sparkly ornamentation for the urban lawn, marked by craft-fair aesthetics and magpie pleasure in glittery materials. Marc Swanson's crystal-bedizened deer cavorts in a plot of decorative planting; its neighbors include a life-size bronze cobra by Jennifer Cohen, a peacock with a tail of costume-jewelled brooches by Carolyn Castaño, Kirsten Hassenfeld's mini-obelisk of lacy white Plexiglas, and a park bench made of bronze boom boxes by Luis Gispert that conjures a lazy summer afternoon on a neighborhood stoop. Through Aug. 31. (MetroTech Center, on Jay St. at Myrtle Promenade. For more information, call the Public Art Fund at 212-980-4575.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

THOMAS ALLEN
Pop-up art ascends to sublime heights in these twenty-by-twenty-four-inch chromogenic prints of constructions made from old books. Why not view the books themselves? Because here the artist controls the lighting, perspective, and focus to create multidimensional scenes rich in detail. In "Swell," a ship with numbered sails rides the wave of the unabridged dictionary it was clipped from. In "Thirst," a femme fatale holds a glass out from her cover, to be filled by a rogue from a neighboring volume. Through Feb. 5. (Foley, 547 W. 27th St. 212-244-9081.)

ROSWELL ANGIER
Expect to be moved, not titillated, by these sixteen vintage black-and-white prints from the mid-nineteen-seventies of strippers in Boston's red-light district. The photographer, born in 1940, knew his subjects and, as a young man, featured them in his book " '. . . A Kind of Life': Conversations in the Combat Zone." Angier's portraits of the denizens of such places as the Two O'Clock Club and the Mousetrap Cabaret are deeply humane, giving these objects of voyeurism a chance to look back at you. Also on view are eleven black-and-white prints, dating from 1978 to 1982, documenting the lives of Native Americans in New Mexico and Arizona. Through Jan. 29. (Gitterman, 170 E. 75th St. 212-734-0868.)





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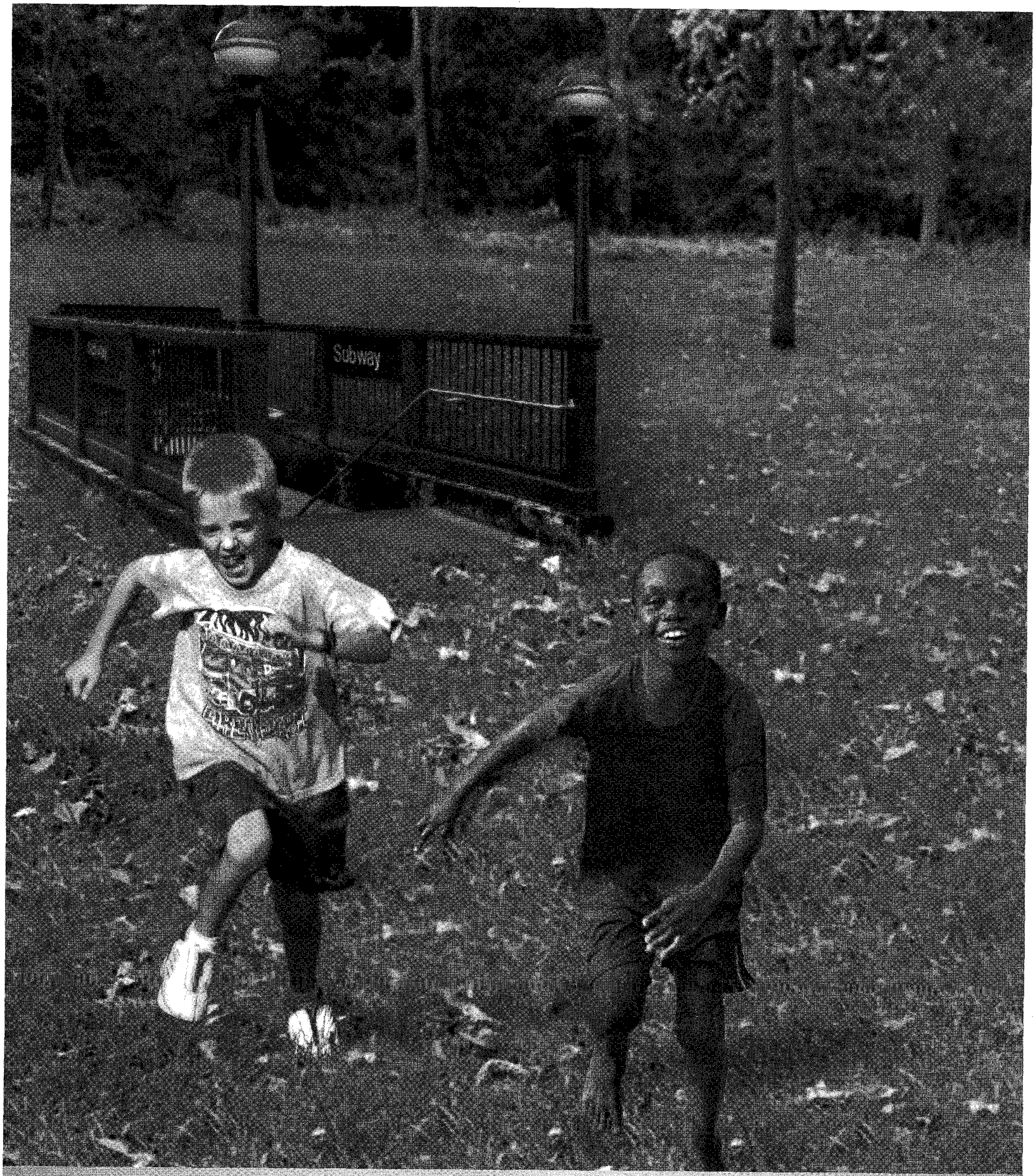

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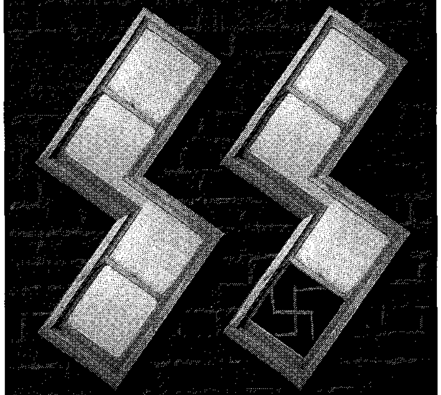
From the award-winning
author of
A Small Death in Lisbon

Robert
Wilson



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—*San Francisco Chronicle*

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—*Baltimore Sun*

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TRISH MORRISSEY
A set of color prints that depict the thirty-seven-year-old Irish photographer and her sister—posed as themselves as children, their parents, and various aunts and friends. Morrissey uses dated clothes like tight running shorts and multicolored nylon coats to create her reimagined family moments, along with formal gimmickry—in "August 8, 1982," a pose at the seaside is marred by two blurry fingers over the lens. Through Feb. 26. (Milo, 552 W. 24th St. 212-414-0370.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Three important photographers, Bill Owens, Ralph Eugene Meatyard, and E. J. Bellocq, provide a primer of sorts on twentieth-century American portraiture. Meatyard, an optician by trade who was from Lexington, Kentucky, died young in 1972, at the height of his powers. He took eerie, surrealistic pictures of his friends and family, often posed wearing plastic masks. This is the largest show of the photographer's work ever seen in New York, with a hundred and fifty images that span his too short career. Bellocq photographed prostitutes in their rooms around 1912 in a straightforward, respectful way. The work was forgotten until Lee Friedlander discovered Bellocq's glass negatives in a New Orleans antique shop. I.C.P. has a selection of Friedlander's prints, shown at MOMA in 1970, and recently discovered vintage prints. Bill Owens's book "Suburbia" made him an instant star when it was published in 1972. His pictures of young families in their new tract homes in Livermore, California, spoke to Western migration, consumer culture, and shifting cultural mores. These equally canny pictures, entitled "Leisure," were taken about ten years later, just before Owens quit photography and opened a microbrewery. Through Feb. 27. (1133 Sixth Ave. 212-857-0000.)

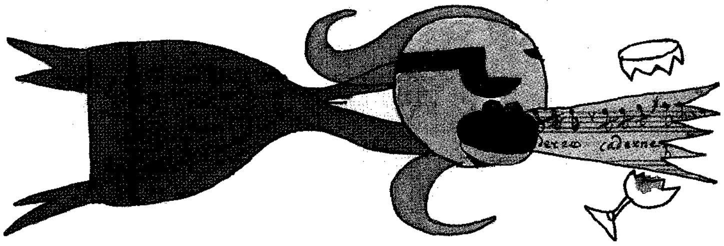
Short List

LALLA ESSAYDI
Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930. Through Feb. 26.

SYLVIA PLACHY
Hunter/Fox, 35 E. 67th St. 212-288-3535. Opens Jan. 13.

CLASSICAL NOTES

The year's best CDs, in alphabetical order.



John Adams, "On the Transmigration of Souls" (Nonesuch)—At its world première, this piece, an ambitious memorial to the victims of 9/11, seemed like a modest success, but on record it has an overwhelming power; Lorin Maazel's command of the score, and the New York Philharmonic's expert playing, brings it to life.

Leon Fleisher, "Two Hands" (Vanguard)—An Indian-summer album of piano works by Bach, Chopin, and others from the eminent musician, who has at last regained the use of both his hands. No American pianist can equal his combination of supple phrasing, intellectual mastery, and interpretive depth.

Daniel S. Godfrey, "String Quartets Nos. 2 and 3; 'Romanza'" (Koch)—The loveliest ten minutes of new music this year comes courtesy of Godfrey, whose "Romanza" filters the lyrical spirit of Borodin and early Stravinsky through an elegantly patrician modern style. The Cassatt String Quartet plays it beautifully.

Joseph Haydn, "The Seasons" (Harmonia Mundi)—Once again, the early-music maestro René Jacobs is the conductor of the year. He recorded not only a refreshingly earthy account of Mozart's "Le Nozze di Figaro" (with Simon Keenlyside and Angelika Kirchschlager, among other singers) but also this colorful performance of Haydn's rarely heard oratorio, featuring the R.I.A.S. Chamber Choir, whose members sing with the agility of soloists.

Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, "Handel Arias" (Avie)—Lieberson, the most emotionally resonant singer today, finds a nuanced style for each of these gems, a selection that includes arias from the opera "Serse" and the oratorio "Theodora," along with the cantata "La Lucrezia." Harry Bicket and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment accompany her with sensitive and powerful playing.

Anne-Sophie Mutter, "Tchaikovsky/Korngold Violin Concertos" (Deutsche Grammophon)—The mannerist extremes of Mutter's style make her recording of the Korngold Concerto just as persuasive as Heifetz' arch-Romantic rendering of fifty years ago. Her husband, André Previn, conducting the London Symphony Orchestra, knows the composer's music better than anyone. Their account of the Tchaikovsky, with the Vienna Philharmonic, is equally bracing.

Schubert, "Winterreise"—Recordings from two utterly different tenors illuminate Schubert's desolate cycle. Ian Bostridge (on EMI), accompanied by Leif Ove Andsnes, provides an immaculate reading full of psychological subtlety; Jon Frederic West (on Medici Classics), with Jerome Rose at the piano, harks back to an age when hefty Wagnerian voices tackled this piece with unabashed emotion.

Schumann, "The Symphonies" (Teldec)—Many conductors see Schumann's four symphonies as the poor stepchildren of the German repertoire, but Daniel Barenboim will have none of it. Here, in a tail-end release from 2003, he leads passionate, hard-driving, and committed performances from the Staatskapelle Berlin, one of the last European ensembles to retain a burnished, Old World sound.

Ludwig Senfl, "Im Maien" (Harmonia Mundi)—The matchless viol consort Fretwork and the tenor Charles Daniels pay tribute to Senfl, one of the first masters of German song, in compelling performances that highlight both the music's rough-hewn energy and its exquisite contrapuntal craft.

Augusta Read Thomas, "Words of the Sea/In My Sky at Twilight" (ARTCD)—Many composers are selling their music on the Web these days, but few more cannily than Thomas, the most accessible ambassador of the new modernism. She has produced an invigorating disk of two major works performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Chicago MusicNOW Ensemble, both conducted by the formidable Pierre Boulez.

Rolando Villazón, "Italian Opera Arias" (Virgin)—Another great young tenor comes along to quell fears of a post-Pavarotti drought. Villazón's florid and affecting singing, accompanied here by the excellent Munich Radio Orchestra under Marcello Viotti, offers a combination of intelligence and glamour not seen since the ascendancy of Domingo.

—*Russell Platt*

ED RUSCHA, ROBERT FRANK, AND WALKER EVANS
Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610. Through Jan. 29.

MALICK SIDIBÉ
Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 212-645-1701. Through Feb. 5.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

CHRISTIE'S
Jan. 11-12 at 10 A.M. and 2: The monthly House Sale is a comprehensive digest of arts both fine and practical: in addition to works by Fernando Botero and Nan Goldin ("Hafen Bar, Berlin"), there is a selection of photographs of Marilyn Monroe, rugs and runners from Central and Southwest Asia, and an eclectic supply of housewares, furniture, and decorations. ♦ Jan. 13 at 10 A.M.: A sale of American Indian art. Some of the offerings (such as a Santee Sioux wood-and-stone pipe, or a Plains painted buffalo-hide robe, expected to bring in fifty thousand dollars) were coöpted by mainstream taste long ago, while others serve as testaments to ageless Native American rituals. Perhaps the most moving item is a Navajo pictorial rug, its hand-spun wool depicting an American flag. A Creek beaded cloth bandolier bag from the early nineteenth century, expected to bring up to ninety thousand dollars, is the highlight of the sale. ♦ Jan. 17-19: Postwar and contemporary highlights from a round of London evening sales to be held Feb. 7-9 have a preliminary run in the New York showroom. In addition to works by Jean-Michel Basquiat, Cy Twombly, and Mark Rothko, all of which are expected to bring in more than a million dollars, two works by Lucian Freud stand out, reminders of his long-lasting career: "Red Haired Man" (1962-63) and "Naked Portrait, 2002," his painting of a pregnant Kate Moss. Impressionist and modern works will be exhibited Jan. 20-23. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

DOYLE
Jan. 12 at 10 A.M.: "Doyle at Home," an occasional auction of American, English, and Continental furnishings and art works offered at moderate prices. (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.)

SWANN
Jan. 13 at 10:30 A.M.: The house holds its latest "Discovery Sale," a selection of more than four hundred reasonably priced prints and drawings. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

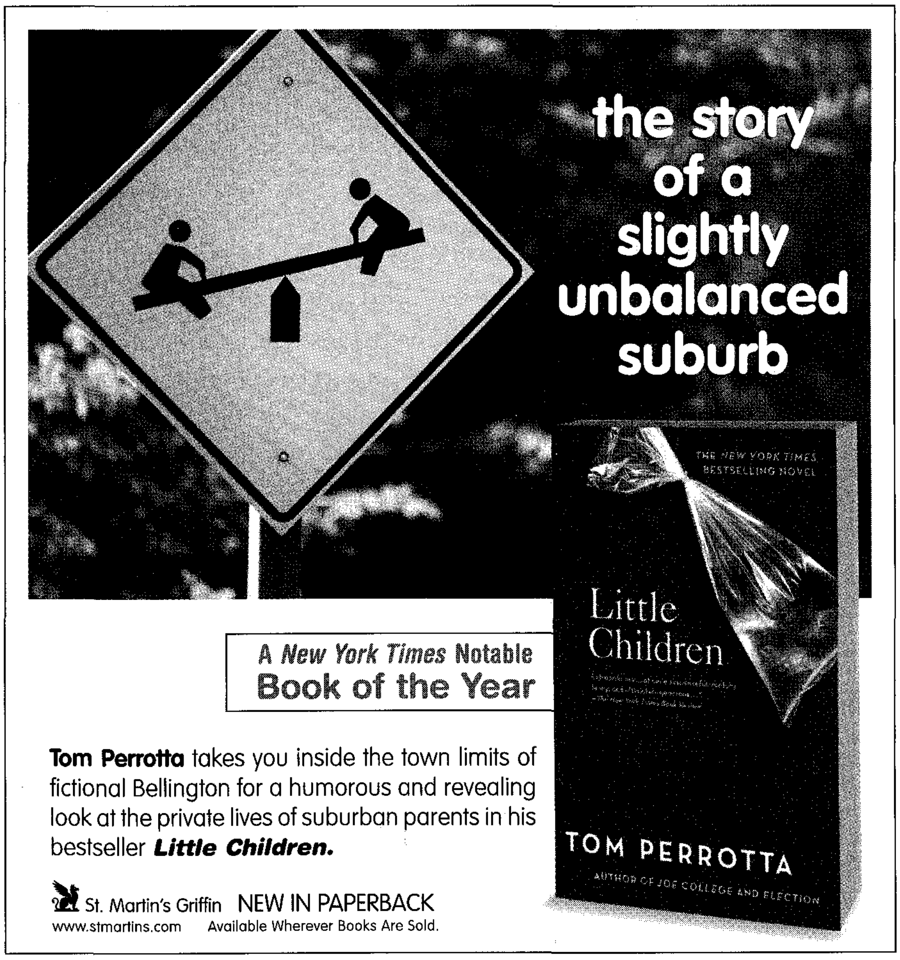
DICAPO OPERA: "CLAUDIA LEGARE"
Dicapo, gamely picking up the slack during the Metropolitan Opera's hiatus, offers the belated New York première of this 1978 adaptation of "Hedda Gabler," set in South Carolina just after the Civil War, by Robert Ward—best known for "The Crucible," another opera based on a classic play. (Dicapo Opera Theatre, 184 E. 76th St. 212-288-9438. Jan. 14-15 and Jan. 22-23 at 8 and Jan. 16 and Jan. 23 at 4.)

BRONX OPERA: "THE CONSUL"
Menotti's skillfully melodramatic Cold War fable—which won the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1950—is presented by this longtime company, based at Lehman College; Michael Spierman conducts a cast of aspiring professionals, with orchestral accompaniment. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Lexington Ave. at 68th St. 212-772-4448. Jan. 14-15 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Lorin Maazel takes a half-step back from his role as new-music advocate to conduct Mozart's Symphony No. 29 and Strauss's Horn Concerto No. 1 (with the formidable Philip Meyers) before leaving the stage to the orchestra's assistant conductor,

DAVID MILLER



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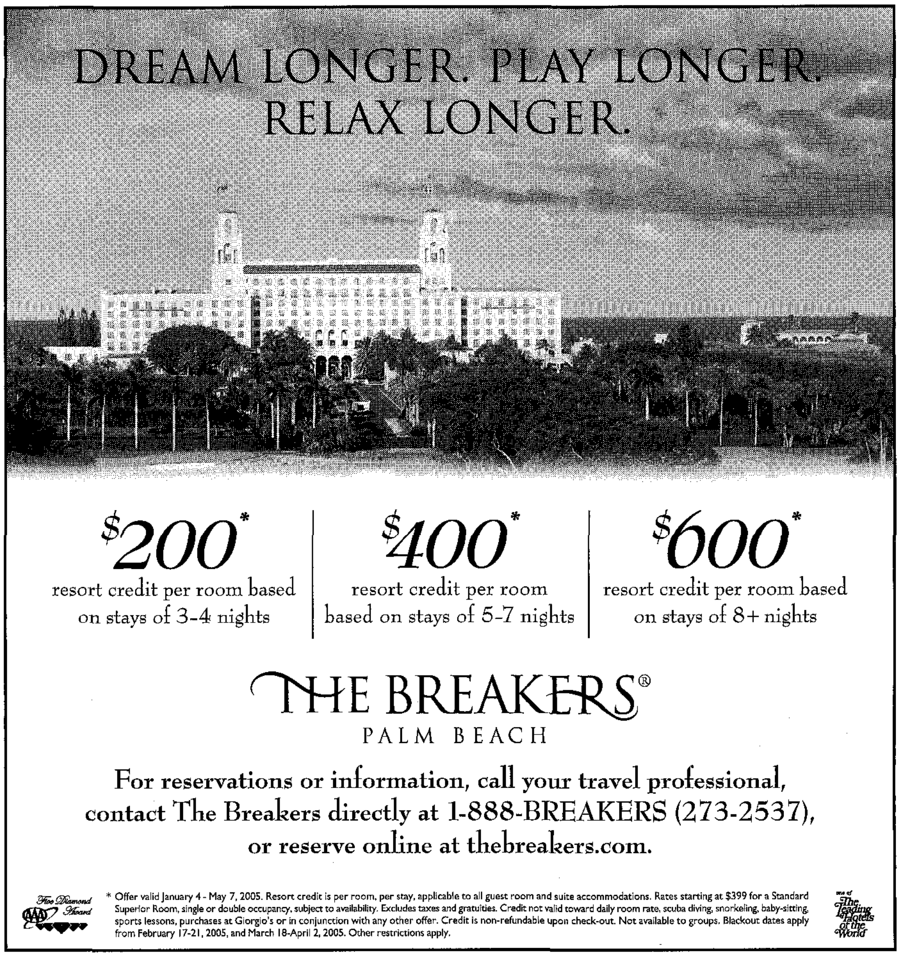

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one of The Leading Hotels of the World

Xian Zhang, who makes her subscription début leading the "Four Sea Interludes," from Britten's "Peter Grimes," and the world première of Mark-Anthony Turnage's "Scherzoid." (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Jan. 12-13 and Jan. 18 at 7:30 and Jan. 15 at 8.)

CARNEGIE HALL FESTIVAL CHORUS: MOZART'S MASS IN C MINOR
Mozart's most important sacred work after the Requiem, beloved but tantalizingly unfinished, has been taken up by the maverick pianist and early-music scholar Robert Levin, who has crafted a performing version of the complete score from Mozart's sketches. Helmuth Rilling, the dean of European choral conductors, leads the Chorus, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, and a vocal quartet (including the soprano Juliane Banse) in the world première. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 15 at 8.)

BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC
John Mauceri, the ebullient conductor of the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, leads the borough's band in music by four composers associated with Brooklyn who excelled in writing for the stage and screen—Herrmann ("Psycho: A Narrative for Orchestra"), Copland, Gershwin, and Corigliano (the "Love Theme" from "Altered States")—as well as two works (the "Theme and Variations" and the Second Chamber Symphony) from the Hollywood years of Arnold Schoenberg. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Jan. 15 at 8.)

MANHATTAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Richard Auldon Clark conducts music by Michael Schelle ("Godzilla Brillante," a New York première), Ned Rorem, Copland, and Duruflé. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Jan. 15 at 8.)

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: "REVOLUTION 1905"
The ever-adventurous Leon Botstein leads his ensemble in a slate of music created around the time of Russia's first rebellion against the Romanov monarchy. Performances of three rarely heard works (Stravinsky's "Fireworks," Glazunov's "Song of Destiny," and Miaskovsky's "Silentium") precede the main offering: Shostakovich's Symphony No. 11, "The Year 1905," one of the composer's most heartfelt and effective essays in socialist realism. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5030. Jan. 16 at 3.)

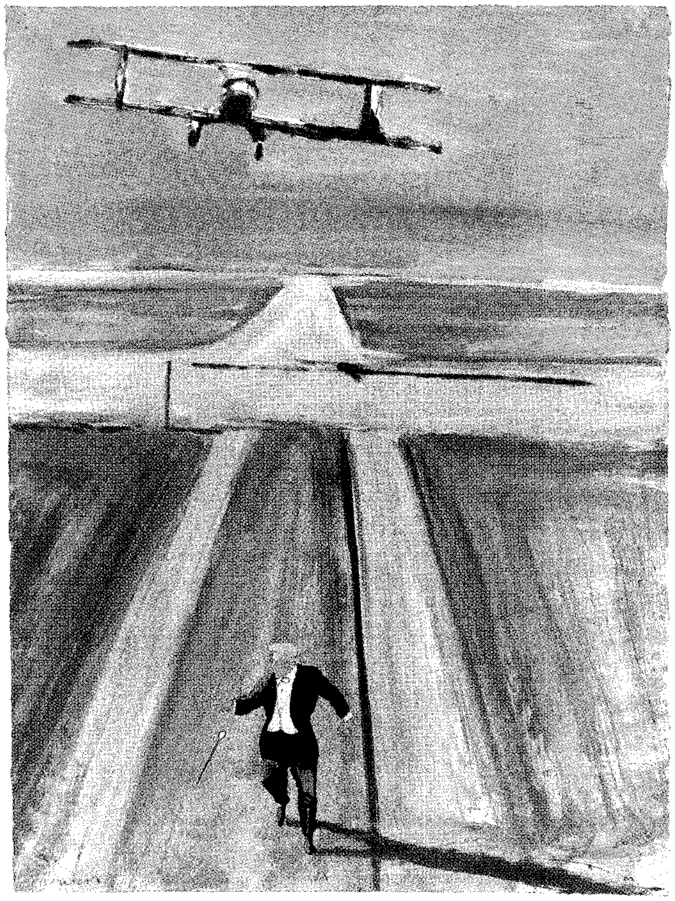
PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
Christoph Eschenbach, continuing his orchestra's robust presence at Carnegie Hall this month, prefludes a concert performance of Act III of "Parsifal" (featuring the tenor John Keyes, the bass Matthias Hölle, the baritone Andreas Schmidt, and the Philadelphia Singers Chorale) with the New York première of the late Luciano Berio's "Stanze." (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 18 at 8.)

RECITALS

SEQUITUR
"Creating the World," another of the ensemble's deftly arranged programs of downtown and uptown composers, takes its name from a work by Eve Beglarian, which will be featured along with music by Bunita Marcus, Carlos Carrillo, and Richard Carrick (the world première of "Cosmicomics," inspired by the Calvino novella and with video by Peter Nigrini). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Jan. 12 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC
The members of the Damocles Trio settle in for a long-weekend residency devoted to Spanish music. Jan. 13-14 at 7:30: Adam Kent performs solo piano works by Rodrigo, Gerhard, Falla, Halffter, and Albéniz (Book I of "Iberia"). ♦ Jan. 15 at 7:30 and Jan. 16 at 4: Kent joins his colleagues (the violinist Airi Yoshioka and the cellist Sibylle Johner) for works by Brotons, Valencia, and Turina (three works, including the Piano Trios Nos. 1 and 2). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

KURTÁG'S "KAFKA FRAGMENTS"
The soprano Dawn Upshaw and the violinist Geoff Nuttall perform the Hungarian composer's iconoclastic masterpiece, with a new staging by Peter Sellars. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 12-13 at 8:30.)



John Mauceri conducts the Brooklyn Philharmonic in film music by Copland, Corigliano, and Bernard Herrmann ("Psycho" and "North by Northwest") on January 15.

MICHAEL CRAWFORD

JULIA FISCHER
The young Austrian violinist makes her New York recital début with a program of works by Beethoven (the "Kreutzer" Sonata), Schubert, Bach, and Prokofiev (the Sonata in D Major, Op. 94 bis). Oliver Schnyder accompanies her. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 14 at 7:30.)

JUILLIARD SCHOOL: CHAMBERFEST
In the last week of the fourth annual round of concerts, the school's outstanding students (coached by such masters as André Emelianoff and Seymour Lipkin) perform chamber-music classics. Jan. 14 at 8: A performance of Shostakovich's String Quartet No. 3 in F Major, along with the Piano Quintets of Schnittke and Brahms. (Alice Tully Hall. For free tickets, which are required, call 212-769-7406.) ♦ Jan. 15 at 8: A final program of music by Brahms, Mendelssohn (the Piano Trio in C Minor, Op. 66), and Schumann (the Piano Quintet). (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. No tickets required.)

"MUSIC BEFORE 1800" SERIES: PAUL O'DETTE
One of the world's reigning lutenists, best known for his Renaissance work, plays music by Bach and Silvius Leopold Weiss, the last Baroque masters to write for his instrument. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. Jan. 16 at 4.)

STEPHANIE BLYTHE
A piquant Franco-English program from the rich-voiced American mezzo-soprano, fresh from an impressive performance alongside Renée Fleming in the Met's "Rodelinda." Warren Jones accompanies her in music by Fauré, Bridge, Vaughan Williams ("Songs of Travel"), and the Russian-American musical polymath Nicolas Slonimsky ("Songs Parodying Advertisements," a satire from 1924). (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. Jan. 16 at 5.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS
The pianist Seymour Lipkin and the violinist Lisa Shihoten join the ensemble in a concert of music by Kreutzer, Reger (the complexly graceful Serenade for Flute, Violin, and Viola), and Mozart (a chamber version of the Piano Concerto No. 14 in E-Flat Major). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 155 W. 66th St. 212-799-1259. Jan. 17 at 2 and 7:30.)

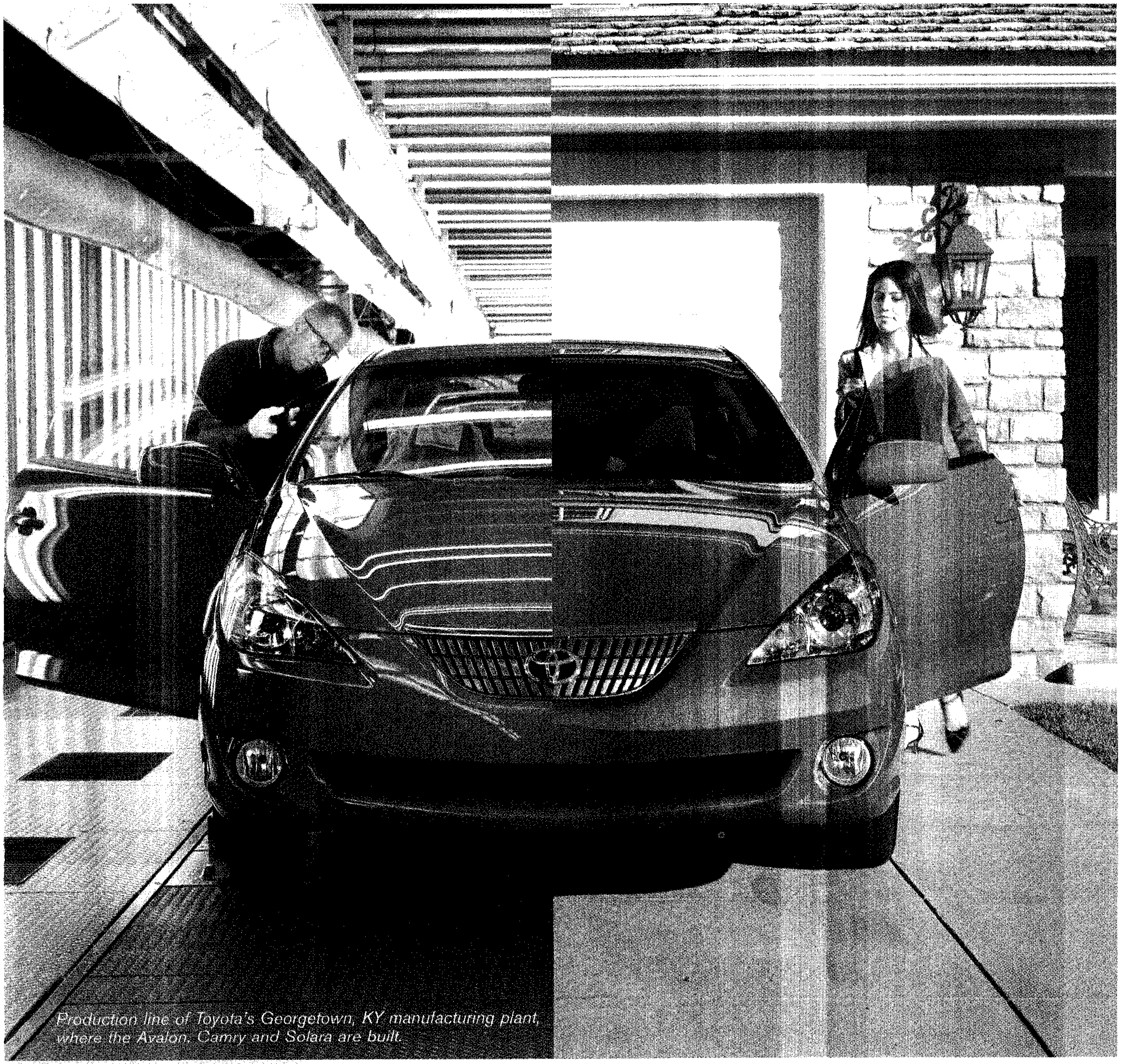
CONCERTANTE
The vibrant string ensemble offers music by Beethoven, Korngold (the ravishing Sextet in D Major), and the Georgian-Israeli composer Josef Bardanashvili (a New York première). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Jan. 18 at 8.)

KRASSIMIRA STOYANOVA
Yelena Kurdina accompanies the young Bulgarian soprano, the winner of the Opera Orchestra of New York's annual recital prize, in a concert of songs by Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Donizetti, Puccini, and Gounod. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-799-1982. Jan. 18 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
Jan. 12 at 6:30: The actors Stephen Colbert, Kathleen Chalfant, and Peter Gerety kick off the new "Selected Shorts" season with adventure and mystery stories by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Teolinda Gersão, and Katherine Mansfield. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400.) ♦ Jan. 13 at 7: Jeffrey Skinner, the winner of the Center for Book Arts' annual chapbook competition, reads from his poetry. Joining him are this year's judges, Sharon Dolin and C. K. Williams, along with the runners-up Jillian Weise and Ted Mathys. (28 W. 27th St., 3rd fl. For more information, call 212-481-0295.) ♦ Jan. 13 at 8: Jon Stewart and a few of his colleagues from "The Daily Show" read from their recent volume, "America (the Book): A Citizen's Guide to Democracy Inaction." A benefit for the Brooklyn-based tutoring organization 826NYC. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400.) ♦ Jan. 15 at 7: A poetry reading with David Shapiro, Charles North, Davey Volner, and Michael Paulson. (Bowery Poetry Club, 308 Bowery, at Bleecker St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ Jan. 18 at 7: John Haskell and Sam Lipsyte offer selections from their respective novels, "American Purgatory" and "Home Land." (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS
Jan. 11 at 6:30: The writer Jonathan Schell interviews Pankaj Mishra, the author of "An End to Suffering: The Buddha in the World." (Celeste Bartos Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 212-930-0855.) ♦ Jan. 12 at 6: Mark Danner discusses his latest book, "Torture and Truth: America, Abu Ghraib, and the War on Terror." (Coliseum Books, 11 W. 42nd St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Jan. 14 at 6:30: The director Jonathan Demme talks with the singer-songwriter Steve Earle. (Celeste Bartos Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 212-930-0855.)



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TOYOTA

MOVIES OPENING

APPLESEED
An anime film directed by Shinji Aramaki and based on the *manga* by Masamune Shirow, set in a future where humans and clones have become nearly indistinguishable. Opening Jan. 14.

LES CHORISTES
The students at a strict boarding school respond to their new music teacher, in a drama set in postwar France. Directed and co-written by Christophe Barratier. In French. Opening Jan. 14.

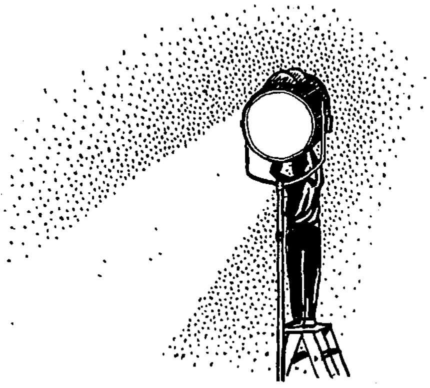
COACH CARTER
Samuel L. Jackson plays an inner-city basketball coach who benches his undefeated team for poor academic performance, in a sports drama directed by Thomas Carter. Opening Jan. 14.

ELEKTRA
A martial-arts movie about a female assassin (Jennifer Garner) who can see into the near future. Directed by Rob Bowman. Opening Jan. 14.

RACING STRIPES
In a family drama that combines live action and animation, an orphaned zebra dreams of becoming a racehorse. The voice cast includes Frankie Muniz, Dustin Hoffman, and Snoop Dogg. Opening Jan. 14.

FILM NOTES

ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER'S THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
A bold but fruitless attempt to disguise the fact that Lloyd Webber's extravaganza belongs on the stage. Theatre audiences, an easily tickled crowd, may still be aroused by the sight of dry ice being puffed across the footlights, but moviegoers, who regularly witness whole cities being trashed, are made of sterner stuff. They are also liable to feel cheated by weak casting, and thus the choice of Gerard Butler (the Phantom), Emmy Rossum (Christine, his protégée), and Patrick Wilson (the Vicomte, her No. 2 squeeze) is unlikely to find universal favor. The score remains a cunning consolation to those who are frightened by the thought of real opera, and the director and co-writer is Joel Schumacher, which means that the enterprise is best viewed, if at all, as a prolonged exercise in interior decoration. With Minnie Driver, enjoying herself no end as a screaming diva.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 1/3/05.) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea West, Cinema



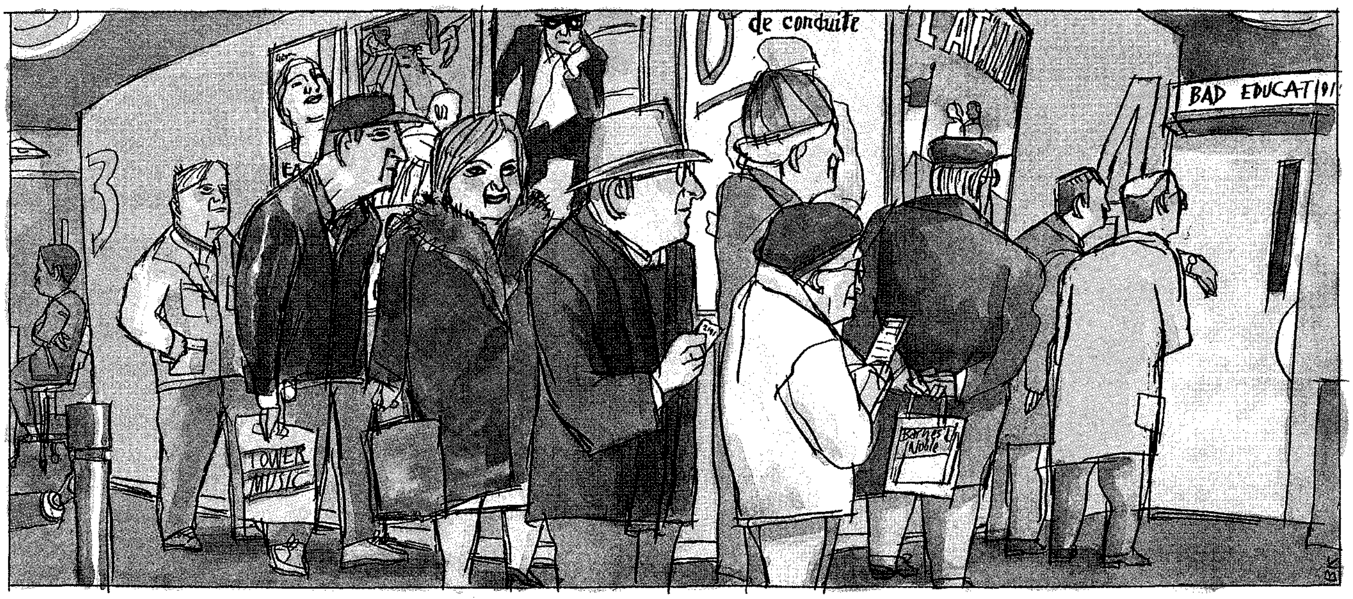
1, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

THE ASSASSINATION OF RICHARD NIXON
In February, 1974, a man named Sam Byck attempted to hijack a commercial jetliner and crash it into the White House in order to kill Richard Nixon, who represented everything that Sam hated about America. Sam's attempt was a failure; he was no better at hijacking than he was at anything else. This bleak but fully felt first film by the writer-director Niels Mueller demonstrates how a fellow who seemed an ordinary loser—a screwup at work and at home—might arrive at such an extreme state. Sean Penn uses a nervous smile and a stammer to convey the outer uncertainties of his character's freakishly stubborn idealism. The movie re-creates Sam's miserable days with enough detail and sympathy to come within hailing distance of such emblematic works of American disillusion as Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman" and Saul Bellow's "Seize the Day." With Don Cheadle, Naomi Watts, and Jack Thompson.—*David Denby* (1/10/05) (Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

THE AVIATOR
The billionaire madman, the taloned hermit of Las Vegas eating nothing but steak and peas—that was the haggard face in the tabloids that millions of us knew in the years before Howard Hughes's death, in 1976. Martin Scorsese's brilliantly entertaining movie goes back to the period when Hughes (Leonardo DiCaprio) was an exhilaratingly handsome and daring young man. The narrative, concocted by the screenwriter John Logan, is not meant to be taken literally. It's a fantasia about a studly capitalist prince who produces and directs movies, designs and flies airplanes, and sleeps with dozens of beautiful actresses and starlets. Scorsese and the designer Dante Ferretti press the young tycoon into the svelte Art Deco look of the period; in his tuxedos and casual beige flying duds, Hughes becomes the pictorial embodiment of restless bravado. Toward the end, there are glimpses of the germ-haunted paranoid that Hughes would become, but the movie is consistently lighthearted and engaging, a sort of pop "Citizen Kane." With Cate Blanchett doing a nervy imitation of Katharine Hepburn, Alec Baldwin as Hughes's rival, and Alan Alda as the corrupt Maine senator Owen Brewster.—*D.D.* (12/20 & 27/04) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

CLOSER
Patrick Marber has adapted his own hit play, of the same name, and given the lucky director, Mike Nichols, a script that he can chew on. Some viewers, or listeners, may flinch at the profanity here, or at the level of honesty that demands such profane expression, but peel away the carnal talk and what you are left with—the bone structure of the piece—is not so different from Noël Coward's "Private Lives." We get two interlocking couples: Dan (Jude Law), a writer who falls in love with Alice (Natalie Portman), a night-club stripper, and Larry (Clive Owen), a doctor who marries a photographer called Anna (Julia Roberts). The transactions are quick and brutal: Dan has anonymous online sex with Larry and a yearlong affair with Anna, Alice leaves Dan and finds work at a club, Larry finds her there and tells her precisely what he wants, and nobody is happy. The film is more civilized than the play, the acid slightly diluted, yet Law, for one, looks eaten away by the bitter pace of it all. Roberts, too, is haunted and pained, whereas Portman and Owen drink and spit their lines with undiminished relish, often at speeds that Nichols can barely handle. Not recommended for couples on a first date.—*A.L.* (12/13/04) (Battery Park 11, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

HOTEL RWANDA
Paul Rusesabagina (Don Cheadle), the Rwandan manager of the four-star Hôtel des Mille Collines, in Kigali, wears a blue suit and tie and is very polite, even deferential, toward everyone. Paul works for the Belgian company that owns the hotel, which has become an oasis for Europeans and for African élites. When the Hutu massacres of the Tutsi minority begin, in the spring of 1994, Paul keeps the Mille Collines running. He also, on the sly, establishes it as a haven for both Hutu and Tutsi fugitives, keeping



Senior-citizen ticket-holders on line for a 4 P.M. showing downstairs at the Lincoln Plaza Cinemas look forward to another grownups' movie—and also perhaps back to the bracing Truffaut and the ur-Woody Allen and the knockout Bergman flicks they first caught at the Carnegie Cinema or the Beacon or the Thalia, when all the world and Anouk Aimée were fresh.—Roger Angell them momentarily safe from the machete-wielding militia, who kill eight hundred thousand people in a few months. Working in Rwanda and South Africa, the writer-director, Terry George, convincingly stages the horrors outside the hotel: the paralyzing fear in the night, the vilely inciting radio broadcasts, the chaos and arbitrary madness of the slaughter. But the true drama of "Hotel Rwanda" lies in the character of Paul, who is betrayed by the Europeans who formed him but who holds to his belief in civility, right through the worst disasters. The movie is a triumph for Cheadle—he never steps outside the character for emotional grandstanding or easy moralism.—*D.D.* (12/20 & 27/04) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

HOUSE OF FLYING DAGGERS

Not a sequel to "Hero," the fantastical hit of the summer, but a chance for the same director, Zhang Yimou, to paint the screen red with his luscious and newly invigorated style. In the middle of the ninth century, two regional policemen (Andy Lau and Takeshi Kaneshiro) take on the might of the Flying Daggers, a furtive antigovernment organization. Their first break is to arrest Mei (Ziyi Zhang), a blind dancer who has all sorts of tricks up her sleeves, most of them liable to cut your throat. One cop goes undercover, hoping that Mei can be seduced into revealing the villains' lair. There is an unembarrassed scent of melodrama to all this, as if Zhang's plot had been infected by the excess of his violent ballets—the knives, arrows, kicks, and leaps with which every contest is resolved, and by which the characters demonstrate their respect for one another and their scorn for the laws of physics. At some point, though, the poise falters, and the movie, unlike "Hero," tips into silliness; in the lust to register nothing but beautiful patterns of movement, the claims of logic, political fear, and even love are blithely blown away. In Mandarin.—*A.L.* (12/13/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 72nd Street East, and Union Square.)

IN THE REALMS OF THE UNREAL

This profile of the fantasy writer and artist Henry Darger, whose life's work was discovered in a small room in Chicago after his death, in 1973, makes for a compelling and somewhat disturbing entertainment. The documentarian Jessica Yu spent years putting together the pieces of Darger's masterwork—a fifteen-thousand-page illustrated novel about a child-slave revolt in a far-off world. The illustrations are fascinating and twisted (mostly naked little girls painted as hermaphrodites), and Yu animates several of them while Darger's text is read, giving life to a bizarre story. Like many eccentrics, Darger expressed his madness through art.—*Bruce Diones* (Film Forum.)

LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 11, 42nd Street E Walk, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE LIFE AQUATIC WITH STEVE ZISSOU

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 11, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

MEET THE FOCKERS

"Meet the Parents" was pretty focking great (and it gets better with age), but this sequel is mostly average, despite the genius casting of Dustin Hoffman and Barbra Streisand as the parents of Gaylord Focker (Ben Stiller). As a hippie lawyer, Hoffman has the most fun in the picture; he breaks out his hyperverbal patter and talks circles around everyone.—*Michael Agger* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

Michael Radford's film of "The Merchant of Venice" stars Al Pacino as Shylock, and the look of him—heavy of tread, eyes darting and wary—defines the encompassing mood. The text has been sliced and pared, and what remains is intimate and sorrowful, as if the characters knew from the start what manner of tribulation they would face. Antonio (Jeremy Irons) seems already to be mourning the loss not just of his ships at sea but of his friend Bassanio (Joseph Fiennes) to the wealthy and marriageable Portia (Lynn Collins). Her early scenes are the weakest in the movie, the comedy of the semi-fantastic sitting uneasily amid the gathering gloom. What Radford does best—and it's a trick he mislaid in the slower niceties of "Il Postino"—is to shove and wheedle the story along, so that the court scene and even the final bickering over marital rings take on the air not merely of patchings-up but of bristling suspense. Much is at stake here, and, to judge by Pacino's burning gaze, the loser, in so villainous a society, is never really in doubt.—*A.L.* (1/3/05) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and 19th Street East 6.)

MILLION DOLLAR BABY

Much of Clint Eastwood's evocative and poetic boxing movie is set in the Hit Pit, a moldy, sweat-stained downtown Los Angeles gym in which crusty veterans train a few serious fighters and many hapless punks. Scrap (Morgan Freeman), an ex-fighter with one functioning eye, works at the gym and exchanges affectionately nasty remarks with the owner, one Frankie Dunn (Eastwood). Against his better judgment, Frankie agrees to take on a tough country woman, Maggie Fitzgerald (Hilary Swank), who, not entirely to our surprise, rapidly becomes the hottest fighter in the sordid but lucrative world of women's boxing. The story, adapted by Paul Haggis from F. X. Toole's collection, "Rope Burns," is borderline trite, but the movie has the sweet melancholy of a great jazz piece.—*D.D.* (12/20 & 27/04) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Square.)

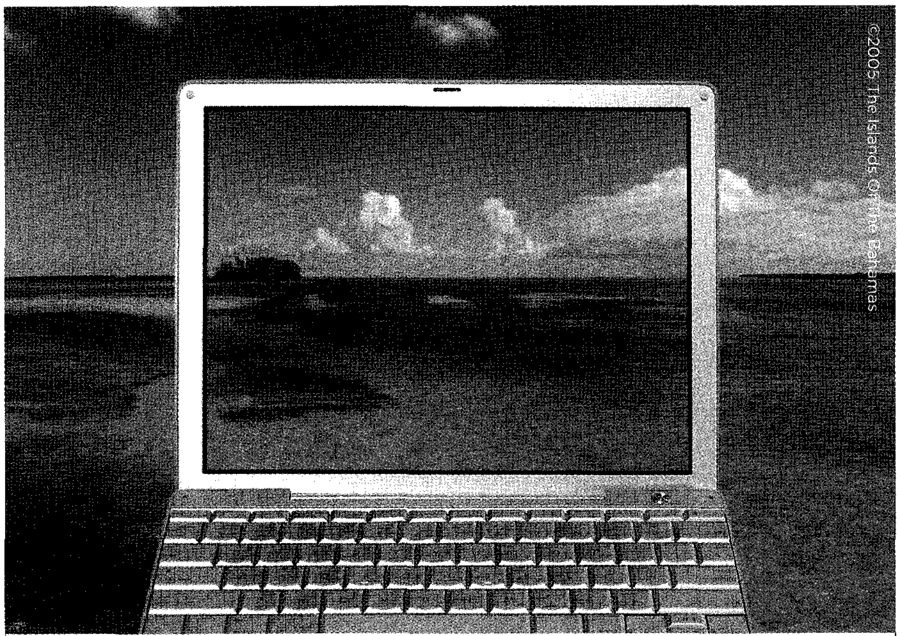
NOTRE MUSIQUE

Jean-Luc Godard, ever ready to follow a noble example, has modelled the structure of his new film—part drama, part documentary, though not a drama-documentary—on Dante. The first section, titled "Hell," is a mashing-together of violence, shuffling clips of actual war into snatches of war movies; one longs to know how, or whether, Godard distinguishes between them, given that so much of his youthful work paid homage to Hollywood genres. The second, purgatorial part is the meat of the movie, following Godard himself around a shrouded Sarajevo, where he lectures on subjects dear to him—including the vision of Bernadette, no less—and where a young Israeli woman tracks down the French ambassador. Last and harshest is the advent of heaven—a kitschy but placid paradise beside a lake, guarded by an American marine. The director's rage against conflict is hardly new but none the less impassioned for that, and, despite the occasional false note (the intrusion of American Indians is too gauche to have the desired political effect), there are passages of autumnal sublimity that nobody but Godard could achieve. The soundtrack alone, the trove of a musical magpie, is worth a ticket. In French.—*A.L.* (Cinema Village.)

OCEAN'S TWELVE

This mock caper movie jerks along in the same incoherent style as Steven Soderbergh's 2002 "Full Frontal," which was a mock art movie. Soderbergh and the producer Jerry Weintraub jammed a script by George Nolfi into the "Ocean's Eleven" formula, and the result is a sequel devoted to an insultingly silly premise: Andy Garcia, the Vegas casino owner whom the team ripped off in the first movie, wants his money back, so the boys have to steal other people's money in order to repay him; they then get into a competition with the greatest thief in Europe to lift a Fabergé egg from a Roman museum. Much narrative repetition and dishevelment follow, underlined by inept "spontaneous" camera work. The actors run numbers on each other's heads and hang out at George Clooney's actual villa on Lake Como; Bruce Willis shows up, trying to pretend he's in on the joke, and smirks his way through several awkward scenes. Soderbergh and the rest may be embarrassed by the artificiality of caper movies, but their way of expressing their uneasiness frustrates the audience's desire to enter into a harmless fantasy. In the end, everyone in the movie has fun except the people

BEN KATCHOR



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watching it.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 11, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

SPANGLISH

James L. Brooks's ambitious new comedy chokes on an excess of sincerity and guilt. Flor (Paz Vega), a lustrously beautiful Mexican woman, crosses the border with her perfect daughter, Cristina (Shelbie Bruce), and takes a job in a prosperous Los Angeles household headed by John Clasky (Adam Sandler), allegedly the hottest chef in town, and his wife, Deborah (Téa Leoni), an out-of-work designer in a state of thrashing hysteria. Brooks tries to satirize Deborah as a hapless narcissist who means well but gets everything wrong, but from the first scene Leoni hyperventilates so violently that her performance has nowhere to go; she can only repeat herself until she spirals down into exhaustion and tears. Sandler's chef is meant to be a good daddy and a nice fellow, but Sandler gives a slack, sexless, and meandering performance. The movie feels like an expression of white shame: the Claskys come off as generous but undisciplined and careless, whereas the working-class Flor, obsessed with protecting her daughter from corruption and from Anglo culture, is entirely moral and dignified. There are a few funny scenes, but most of the movie is excruciating. With Cloris Leachman, in good form, as Deborah's hard-drinking and hard-headed mother.—*D.D.* (1/10/05) (Battery Park 11, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE WOODSMAN

As a paroled pedophile battling his demons, Kevin Bacon gives one of his finest performances to date in this uncomfortable, melancholic film by the first-time director Nicole Kassell. The topic makes for a high-wire début, but Kassell does a good job balancing a story that asks for a certain amount of empathy for a heinous character. There's a delicacy to Bacon's acting that turns his character's messy psychological details into a compelling drama. With the excellent Mos Def as a contemptuous probation cop.—*B.D.* (Empire 25, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

ALSO PLAYING

BAD EDUCATION (11/22/04)
BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.

IN GOOD COMPANY
Lincoln Square.

SIDEWAYS (10/25/04)
BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.

A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
Chelsea West, Paris, and Sunshine Cinema.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 11, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
MetroTwin, Broadway at 99th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Pioneer Theatre, 155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182).
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Feb. 13: Films selected by the New York Film Critics Circle. Jan. 15 at 2: "Citizen Ruth" (1996, Alexander Payne). ♦ Jan. 15 at 4:30: "Un Chien Andalou" (1928, Luis Buñuel) and "L'Âge d'Or" (1931, Buñuel). ♦ Jan. 16 at 2: "To Be or Not to Be" (1942, Ernst Lubitsch). ♦ Jan. 16 at 4: "Mission to Moscow" (1943, Michael Curtiz). ♦ Repertory nights. Jan. 15-16 at 6:30: "Cries and Whispers" (1972, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—"Essential Cinema." Jan. 12 at 8: Stan Brakhage films. ♦ Jan. 13-15: The Red Shift Festival, cinematic works by Russian expatriates. ♦ Through Jan. 20: German *Heimatfilm* of the nineteen-fifties. All films are in German. Jan. 14 at 7 and Jan. 17 at 9: "Black Forest Girl" (1950, Hans Deppe). ♦ Jan. 14 at 9:15 and Jan. 17 at 7: "Roses Bloom on the Grave in the Meadow" (1952, Hans H. König). ♦ Jan. 15 at 4:30 and Jan. 18 at 7: "Echo of the Mountains" (1954, Alfons Stummer). ♦ Jan. 15 at 7 and Jan. 18 at 9:15: "The Fisher Girl of Lake Constance" (1956, Harald Reinl). ♦ Jan. 15 at 9: "The Farmer's Perjury" (1956, Rudolf Jugert). ♦ Jan. 16 at 4:30: "High Up on the Mountain" (1957, Géza von Bolvary). ♦ Jan. 16 at 7: "Lady Country Doctor" (1958, Paul May). ♦ Jan. 16 at 9: "The Girl of the Moors" (1958, Gustaf Ucicky).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Jan. 12-18 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "The Leopard" (1963, Luchino Visconti; in Italian).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Claire Denis films. Jan. 18 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Keep It to Yourself" (1991) and "Beau Travail" (1999; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Through Jan. 31: "Premières," new films and recent restorations. Jan. 12 at 6 and Jan. 15 at 2: "The Other Woman" (2004, Margarethe von Trotta; in German). ♦ Jan. 12 at 8:"Strictly Ballroom" (1992, Baz Luhrmann). ♦ Jan. 12 at 8:30: "Walk of Three Chairs" (2003, Breda Beban) and two other shorts. ♦ Jan. 13 at 6: The third chapter of "Histoire(s) du Cinéma" (1998, Jean-Luc Godard; in French). ♦ Jan. 13 at 7:30: The fourth chapter of "Histoire(s) du Cinéma" (1998, Godard; in French). ♦ Jan. 13 at 8: "Rocco and His Brothers" (1960, Luchino Visconti; in Italian). ♦ Jan. 14 at 5: "Good Luncheonette" (2004, Peter Sillen) and "I Like Killing Flies" (2003, Matt Mahurin). ♦ Jan. 14 at 7:30 and Jan. 16 at 2: "The Mandarin" (1918, Fritz Freisler). ♦ Jan. 14 at 8: "Onochord" (2005, Yoko Ono). ♦ Jan. 15 at 2:30: "Birdpeople" (2004, Michael Gitlin). ♦ Jan. 15 at 5:30: "Chain" (2004, Jem Cohen). ♦ Jan. 15 at 8 and Jan. 17 at 5: "Tea" (2005, Frank Scheffer). ♦ Jan. 15 at 8:30: "The Dark Mirror" (1946, Robert Siodmak). ♦ Jan. 16 at 2: The complete "Histoire(s) du Cinéma" (1998, Godard; in French). ♦ Jan. 16 at 5: "L'Avventura" (1960, Michelangelo Antonioni; in Italian). ♦ Jan. 17 at 7: "Five" (2004, Abbas Kiarostami). ♦ Jan. 17 at 7:30: "William Eggleston in the Real World" (2005, Michael Almereyda). ♦ Miramax's twenty-fifth anniversary. Jan. 13 at 5:30: "Chicago" (2002, Rob Marshall).

At Anthology Film Archives, a retrospective of German Heimatfilm, a postwar genre that's matured into kitsch.

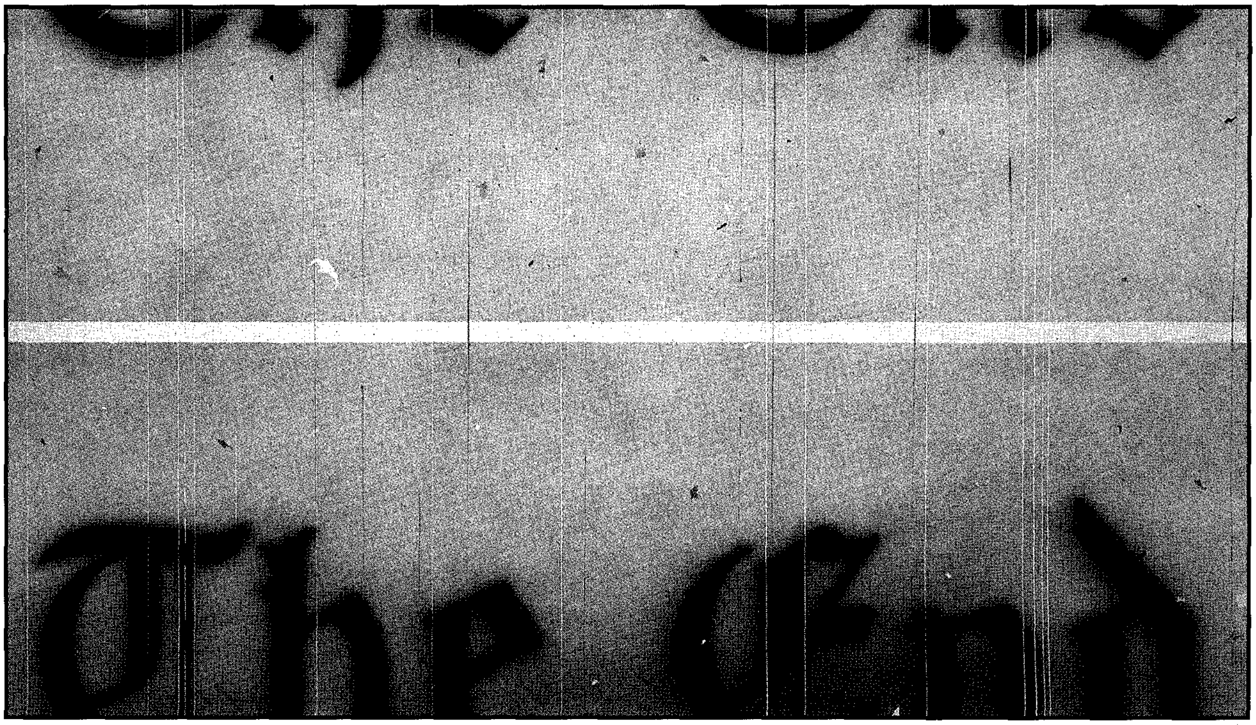
ZOHAR LAZAR

SUNSHINE CINEMA

143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. Jan. 14-16: "Scarface" (1983, Brian De Palma).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Jan. 22: Dance on Camera Festival. Jan. 14 at 1: "Carmen and Geoffrey" (2004, Linda Atkinson and Nick Doob). ♦ Jan. 14 at 4 and Jan. 15 at 1: "Late Premiere" (2003, Victor Bocharov). ♦ Jan. 14 at 6:30 and Jan. 15 at 3: "Celebrating Bravo!FACT." ♦ Jan. 14 at 9: "Somewhere in Between" (2004, Pierre Coulibeuf and Meg Stuart). ♦ Through Jan. 27: The New York Jewish Film Festival. Jan. 12-13 at 1 and Jan. 17 at 12:30: "The Man Who Loved Haugesund" (2003, Jon Haukeland and Tore Vollan). ♦ Jan. 12 at 4 and 8:30 and Jan. 13 at 6:15: "Film as a Subversive Art: Amos Vogel and Cinema 16" (2003, Paul Cronin). ♦ Jan. 12 at 6: "Lost Embrace" (2004, Daniel Burman; in Spanish). ♦ Jan. 13 and Jan. 16 at 4 and Jan. 18 at 6: "Watermarks" (2004, Yaron Zilberman). ♦ Jan. 13 at 8:15, Jan. 15 at 9:15, and Jan. 16 at 6:30: "Tomorrow We Move" (2003, Chantal Akerman; in French). ♦ Jan. 15 at 7 and Jan. 16 at 9: "Nina's Tragedies" (2003, Savi Gabizon; in Hebrew). ♦ Jan. 16 at 1:30, Jan. 17 at 6, and Jan. 18 at 12:30: "Imaginary Witness: Hollywood and the Holocaust" (2004, Daniel Anker). ♦ Jan. 17 at 3:30: "The Mortal Storm" (1940, Frank Borzage). ♦ Jan. 17 at 8:45: "Red Diaper Baby" (2004, Doug Pray). ♦ Jan. 18 at 3:30 and 8:30: "The Pawnbroker" (1964, Sidney Lumet).



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MY FAMILY AT SEA

FICTION BY JONATHAN LOWY

Novelist Lowy is the author of the critically acclaimed
"Elvis and Nixon" as well as the new historical fiction release, "The Temple of Music."

It was my mother's idea that we travel across the Atlantic, and forgo some rushed, cramped jet and take the Queen Mary 2 instead. I didn't know the reasons then—why she wanted to come to Europe with my wife, Dianna, and me, why she insisted we travel by ship. I didn't know then that the journey was the thing, what we miss while passing by. I didn't know the magic of Earth's last nationless domain. I didn't know much then, truth be told. I didn't even know my real name.

We left New York behind, my law practice and e-mails, our apartment and daily *Times*; we left America. My mother would join us on the crossing (my present for her eighty-fifth birthday), and while she traveled to Germany, we would take in London, then chunnel to Paris and beyond. We would reconvene later to return. That was the plan.

It was the first night. Dianna took my mother to the spa while I lost myself in the steamy haze of the sauna, dozed a bit. Then we walked through the ship's corridors, popped into the Chart House Bar (Pernod; a cigar I hadn't enjoyed since the eighties). A crowd was erupting around a man in mid-aria, a tenor from La Scala someone said. Next we scanned the restaurants, opted for French: escargots and bouillabaisse lofted by tuxedoed waiters; Veuve Cliquot and Courvoisier. We were easing into the trip, cozying up with the luxury that draped itself around us. After dinner we wandered more. Thought we saw Michelle Pfeiffer at the casino. Stumbled upon a ballroom and Dianna dragged me in.

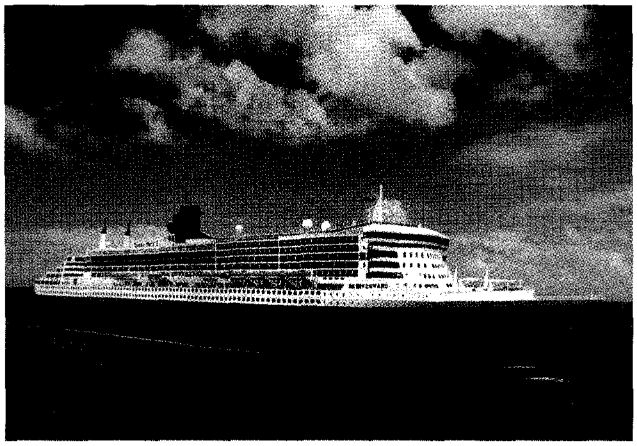
My mother was at a table, transfixed by the swirling circles of couples dancing, the music (a jazz orchestra), the way the waves gently rocked us. We joined her and ordered more drinks.

Then my mother said, suddenly, *I met your father on the Queen Mary*. I wasn't certain I heard right; my father was a mystery in our household, unspoken. It must have been the martinis (mine; hers), the ship displacing us, time and place receding with the land. I looked away. The red sequins of Dianna's gown twinkled in a ballroom spotlight, the moon shimmered off the sea, encasing her in a glow; everyone was young. *A scientist, your father*, my mother went on. *A rising star home in Germany. His family, they were comfortable, loyal, he could have followed that path. But Max, he left home to fight them, the leaders*. The logic to this trip began to reveal itself: an approaching horizon, still distant. *1938. A patriot, your father. The true kind.*

My mother turned to the ocean, her eyes glassy, her mouth wistful; time, passing backwards. 1938, the year before I was born. She was delicate but fiery, eighteen, young Greta Levy. And my father, his image began to form in the mist over the ocean. *Do you know what it felt like?* my mother said. *To be a German back then?*

There were questions I had never asked her but I couldn't now. *When we touch land*, she said, *you will find out.*

The band hit some jazz ballad, and Dianna drew me out onto the deck. Waves lapped the hull, starlight danced off the ocean, music from sixty years ago blew in with the north wind. Somewhere in that mad chaos of energy our eyes connected. I took her in my arms.



And that moment? That moment when time and place and all the shackles of the past slipped off our shoulders, were carried away by the ocean breeze? When we, Dianna and I, found ourselves crying on the deck, and laughing too, when I spun her around and a gull overhead mocked our motions with less grace than our suddenly youthful selves? That was the moment when land became no longer visible to us. That was when our voyage truly began.

To Be Continued

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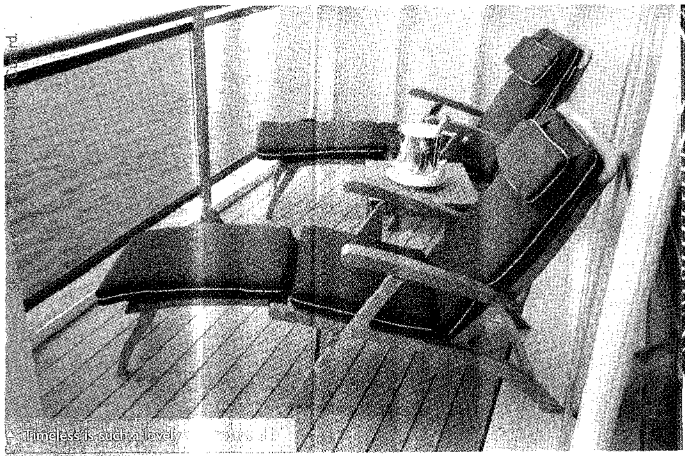

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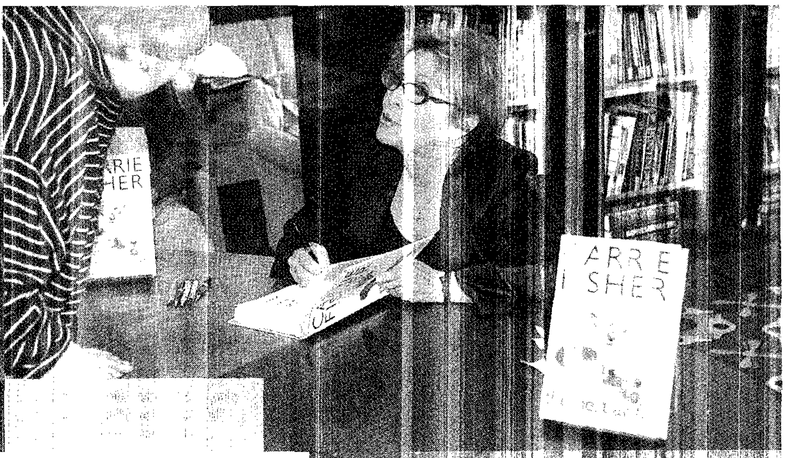

ARRIE
ISHER

▲ [illegible] Sé[illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] news, or a crossword puzzle.

▲ Rubbing elbows with roy[illegible] is one thing. Wiping the deck with them at shuffleboard is quite another.

[illegible] always [illegible] mance [illegible] the [illegible] sea.

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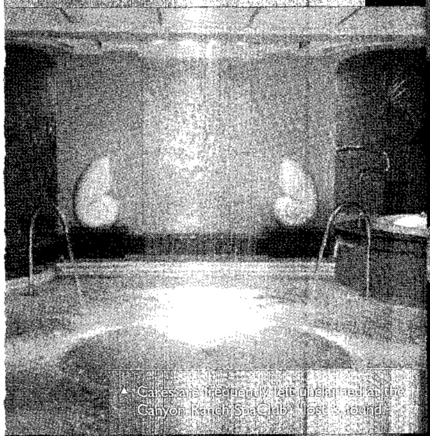

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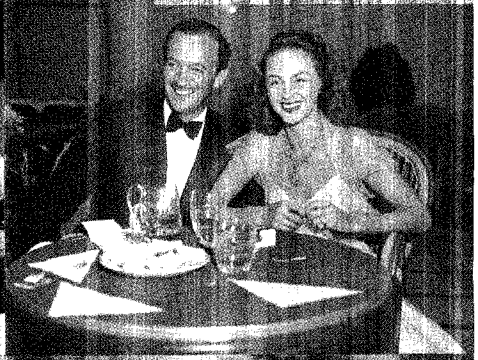

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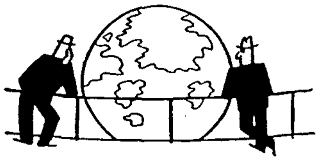
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

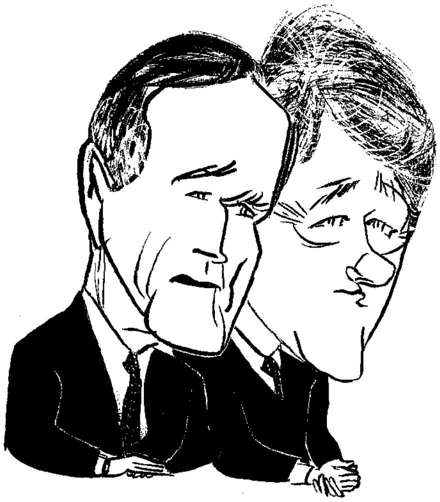
COMMENT
FLOOD TIDE



Nearly four million men, women, and children have died as a consequence of the Congo civil war. Seventy thousand have perished in the genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan. In the year just ended, scores of thousands died in wars and massacres elsewhere in Africa, in Asia, in the archipelagoes of the Pacific, and, of course, in Iraq. Less dramatically, but just as lethally, two million people died of malaria around the world, and another million and a half of diarrhea. Five million children died of hunger. Three million people died of AIDS, mostly in Africa. The suffering of these untimely and terrible deaths—whether inflicted by deliberate violence, the result of human agency, or by avoidable or treatable malady, the result of human neglect—is multiplied by heartbroken parents and spouses, numbed and abandoned children, and, often, ruined survivors vulnerable to disease and predation and dependent, if they are lucky, on the spotty kindness of strangers.

The giant wave that radiated from western Sumatra on the day after Christmas destroyed the lives of at least a hundred and fifty thousand people and the livelihoods of millions more. A hundred and fifty thousand: fifty times the toll of 9/11, but "only" a few per cent of that of the year's slower, more diffuse horrors. The routine disasters of war and pestilence do, of course, call forth a measure of relief from public and private agencies (and to note that this relief is almost always inadequate is merely to highlight the dedication of those who deliver it). But the great tsunami has struck a deeper chord of sympathy.

One can understand why. Partly it's that although the scale of the horror is unimaginable (or so it has been repeatedly described), the horror itself is all too imaginable. A giant wave speaks to a childlike fear that can be apprehended by anyone who has ventured too far out from the beach in a suddenly mounting swell, has felt helpless in the suck of undertow or riptide, has been slammed and spun and choked by a breaker tall enough to block the sky. Partly it's that the reach of the disaster was so vast, far vaster than any hurricane or monsoon or terrestrial earthquake: three thousand miles from end to end. Partly it's that people from all over the world, seeking a holiday in the sun, witnessed the catastrophe. People from more than fifty countries lost their lives in it; among the dead and missing, nearly two weeks later, were more than seven thousand foreign tourists. (Nearly two thousand of them were Swedes; if that number holds, then Sweden's immediate losses, proportionately, will be greater than Thailand's.) Finally, and perhaps most important, it's that this is a drama that has victims and heroes—but no villains. No human ones, anyway.



The terrible arbitrariness of the disaster has troubled clergymen of many persuasions. The Archbishop of Canterbury is among those newly struggling with the old question of how a just and loving God could permit, let alone will, such an undeserved horror. (Of course, there are also preachers, thankfully few, who hold that the horror is not only humanly deserved but divinely intended, on account of this or that sin or depredation.) The tsunami, like the city-size asteroid that, on September 29th, missed the earth by only four times the distance of the moon, is a reminder that, one way or another, this is the way the world ends. Man's laws are proscriptive, nature's merely descriptive.

Yet it is the very "meaninglessness" of the catastrophe—its lack of human agency, its failure to fit into any scheme of human reward and punishment—that

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

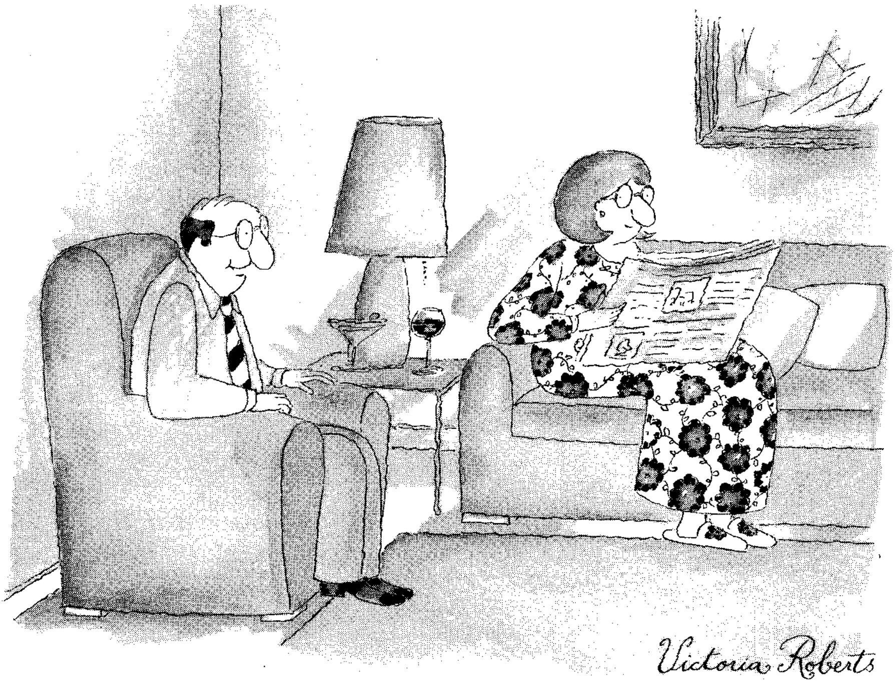
has helped make possible the simple solidarity of the global response. President Reagan, to the exasperation of his aides, used to muse that human beings, faced with some mortal threat from beyond the skies, would put aside their differences in common cause. Something like that, on a very modest scale, appears to be happening as the world clamors to help the survivors of the destroyer from beneath the seas. Tsunamis have no politics.

Even so, there were familiar elements in the responses of the Bush Administration. Two days after the disaster, a White House spokesman, asked why President Bush himself had so far remained silent, explained, "He didn't want to make a symbolic statement about 'we feel your pain.' " On the third day, the President finally voiced his condolences in person, and two days later the government's emergency-aid allotment, initially pegged at fifteen million dollars, was raised to three hundred and fifty million, where it remains. On the eighth day, even as Secretary of State Colin Powell, in Thailand, was saying that enough money was at hand, Bush, now back at the White House, appeared side by side with his father, George H. W. Bush (whom he had never before granted such a public role), and his father's successor, Bill Clinton (the object of his spokesman's snideness), to announce that he was appointing them to lead a private fund-raising drive in the United States.

"We're a very generous, kindhearted nation," the President said on December 29th. And so we are. But it is unseemly to boast about it at such a moment. It would be unseemly even if it were not the case that Australia, Germany, and Japan have been considerably more generous in absolute terms and perhaps a dozen other countries have been more so in per-capita terms. "We're showing the compassion of our nation in the swift response," Bush said on January 3rd. "But the greatest source of America's generosity is not our government—it's the good heart of the American people." That is true, too; but it is also true, or should be, that in a democracy a government's generosity is an expression of a people's heart, not something separate from it. There is reason to worry that the Administration regards private relief efforts as a partial replacement for, rather than as a supplement to, the efforts of the United States government; and reason to worry, too, that the funds for tsunami relief will come at the expense of victims of disasters yet to occur. According to the *Times*, the Administration plans to use money from the disaster-and-famine-assistance program of the United States Agency for International Development, whose budget for this year is $384.9 million, and consulted with "senior Republican lawmakers" to try "to cover the costs of this disaster without undermining Mr. Bush's other priorities," such as "making his tax cuts permanent."

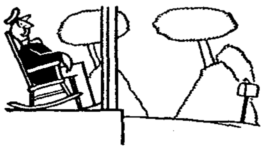
A few influential Republicans, however, are beginning to say that America should help the victims of the tsunami without beggaring other assistance programs, and if their view prevails then our aid will indeed be, as the Administration insists, an expression of "American values." But these are American values that, at least for the moment, are also manifestly German values and Japanese values and Norwegian and Swedish and Spanish and British values and Sri Lankan and Indian values—values that are, like the victims of the tsunami, simply human.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*



"I'm selling you on eBay."

COLD CASE DEPT.
VISITING PREACHER KILLEN



A sign on the narrow road that leads to Edgar Ray Killen's house, in the low hills southeast of Philadelphia, Mississippi, reads "If You Don't Believe in God, the Hellfire Awaits You." On the morning that I visited him, a few years ago, Killen, a reputed Ku Klux Klansman, was waiting for me, a shotgun in his sunburned arms. "I told you I ain't talking with you," he said, superfluously. Killen is known around Philadelphia as Preacher. He used to preside over a small church nearby, where he taught the inerrancy of the Bible and the superiority of the Caucasian race, but that day he was apparently caring for his weapons. "My gun's clean and ready," he said.

We had spoken by telephone earlier, and I had already come to his house once that day, but his dogs, their teeth bared, had surrounded my car. I returned an hour later with a bag of hamburgers from McDonald's. As the dogs ate, I quickly moved up Killen's walk, where he and his Remington intercepted me. He was leathery and bent over, but his arms were roped with muscle. He seemed to be living proof that time does not temper rage. He was seventy-six when I saw him.

"I told you I don't want to talk about those boys no more," he said. The "boys," Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney—"two Jews and a black," in the shorthand of the civil-rights martyrology—were Freedom Summer workers (Schwerner and Goodman were from New York; Chaney from Mississippi) who were executed by a posse of white racists. (Schwerner and Goodman were shot in the chest; Chaney was beaten to death.) The killings took place on Rock Cut Road, a short walk from Killen's house, and it has long been alleged that Killen, who, according to the F.B.I., was a founder of the local Klavern, organized the murder party. He was indicted on federal charges not long after the killings, but he benefitted at trial from a deadlocked jury. A holdout juror said she could not convict a preacher.

Killen escaped state charges until last Thursday, when Mississippi indicted him for the murders. (He pleaded not guilty on Friday.) Prosecutors promised that more indictments would be coming. There are eight suspects who are still alive.

At the time I saw Killen, Mike Moore, who was at that time the attorney general of Mississippi, was reinvestigating the murders, and I told Killen I was seeking his opinion about the new attention the case was receiving.

He looked up and down the road. "You don't have TV cameras with you?" he asked. Then he relaxed a bit. "It's over," he said. "The whole thing's over a long time ago."

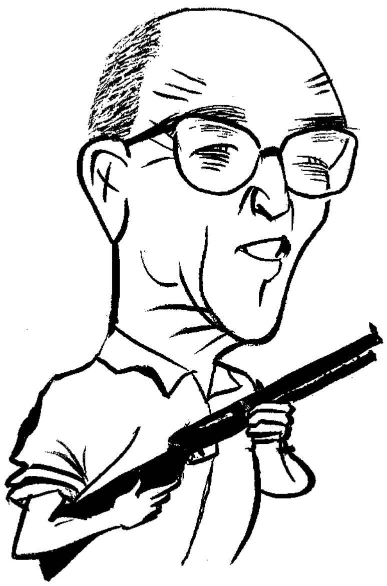
He'd been more talkative a few years earlier in an interview with David Oshinsky for the *Times Magazine*. "I'm a right-winger who supports the Constitution as written by the Founding Fathers," he'd said. When Oshinsky asked him about the murders, he replied, "Those boys were Communists who went to a Communist training school. I'm sorry they got themselves killed. But I can't show remorse for something I didn't do."

He explained to me that he was wary of the press. Oshinsky, he alleged, had misinterpreted his views. "I believe he's Jewish," Killen said.

He was resolute about not addressing the case against him, but he hinted that he was the victim of a conspiracy organized by newly powerful African-Americans. "There are people in the government who wouldn't have ever been allowed in the government before," he said.

It was pointless to ask him about issues of guilt and innocence. Instead, I mentioned a conversation I'd had with Stan Dearman, who was then the editor of the local paper. Dearman had told me that some people in the town were thinking of building a memorial to the murdered civil-rights workers.

This prospect sent Killen into a rage. At first, he didn't even understand. "A memorial?" he asked. "To who? The dead guys?"



Edgar Ray Killen

I nodded.

"Never!" he shouted. "It'll never happen."

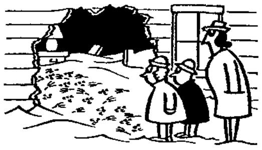
After a moment, he asked me to leave. He said, "I'm not a man of violence, but if you don't get off my property right now, I'm going to shoot you dead."

I went to my car. The dogs gave chase, and I tried hard not to run them over. Killen came out to the road. In my rearview mirror, I saw his face, contorted in fury, slowly disappear.

—*Jeffrey Goldberg*

AFTER THE FLOOD

THE THIRD "R"



The South Indian fishing village of Komitichavadi, about seventy-five miles south of Chennai, the capital of the state of Tamil Nadu, is situated on a stretch of coast that was particularly hard hit by the tsunami. In the neighboring hamlets, fifty-nine people, mostly babies and the elderly, were killed. Hundreds were injured, and many are missing. In Komitichavadi, however, not a single person died; everyone has been accounted for.

The villagers owe their good fortune to the quick thinking of Govind, the headman of the local *panchayat*, a traditional village council of a kind that exists all over rural India. On the morning of the tsunami, Govind received a call on his cell phone from his wife. She was in Chennai, where she had felt tremors from the earthquake off Indonesia, a thousand miles away. Soon, Govind noticed the ocean rising, and his wife called again. The waters were flooding the beach promenade in Chennai, she said, and people were being swept away; she begged her husband to escape. Instead, Govind rushed to the ocean, where children were playing and fishermen were sorting through their catch. He ran along the beach, waving his arms in the air, warning everyone to flee. A few minutes later, the water rushed in. "Everyone just ran," Govind said. "They didn't even have time to save their nets. They just ran up the hill to the temple and sat and waited."

Though no one died, the village was destroyed. Fifteen homes along the waterfront were demolished. More than a hundred boats were lost; fishing nets, some worth almost as much as the boats, were damaged or lost. The village prawn farm, where forty people were employed and a new building had just been constructed, has been shut down. January is usually a big month for fishermen: they can earn as much as ten thousand rupees (more than two hundred and twenty dollars) a week. Now those earnings, as well as those for the coming months, are lost.

People involved in crisis management like to refer to "the three 'R's": rescue, relief, and rehabilitation. The last stage is in many ways the most important, as well as the most expensive and time-consuming—and therefore the most widely ignored. For now, the aid is flowing in; people seem resigned to living off charity for a few months. But once that dries up it's anyone's guess what the villagers of South India are going to do to get by.

On a sunny afternoon ten days after

the tsunami, Govind, who is forty-seven, sat in his living room, the green walls decorated with portraits of deities, and spoke about the *panchayat's* relief work. The sea was visible through his front door; it was calm, but the beach was deserted. There were no boats or ships on the water.

Immediately after the tsunami, Govind said, everyone had congregated by the temple, under a sprawling banyan tree. The whole village, in effect, had become a refugee camp. With no aid or government workers in sight, Govind borrowed a hundred and thirty thousand rupees (almost three thousand dollars) from some neighboring landowners and used the money to buy rice and build makeshift tents outside the temple.

A few days later, government aid workers finally showed up and assessed the damage. Relief—in the form of rice, kerosene, and two bedsheets per family—arrived soon after. No relief has come from international aid agencies. "We're not Nagapattinam," Govind said, referring to a part of the coast where thousands had died. "But we're still scared."

With other members of the *panchayat*, Govind went to see the local district collector, the highest-ranking bureaucrat in the region, fifty miles away. Govind told the collector, "Food and clothes and pots and pans are fine, but we need boats and motors and nets to keep alive. We need to start new lives." The collector promised to help. The *panchayat* gave him a list of those who lost boats, nets, or houses.

Last Thursday, early in the morning, a group of four volunteers pulled up at Govind's house in a maroon Maruti. Govind was outside brushing his teeth. They introduced themselves. Two of them, a man and a woman, were from Bangalore, more than two hundred miles inland, and two were locals. They were not affiliated with any organization; they had raised money and materials from friends.

Govind was thrilled to see aid workers. He took them to the beach, showed them how far the water had reached, and described how the boats had been sucked out to sea. He pointed out a damaged boat from another village that had washed ashore. They were struck by the neatness of the waterfront: the debris had mostly been cleared. They asked Govind how many people had died in Komitichavadi, and Govind said none. This seemed to disappoint the people from Bangalore. The woman mentioned that the scene did not much resemble what she had seen on TV. They had come looking, one of the workers later said, for "places that had been really destroyed."

The group spent about half an hour in the village. As they were leaving, Govind asked, "Are you actually going to help us, or are you just passing through?"

They drove back onto the main road and headed south to a village about forty miles away. Sixteen people had died there, and twenty-five in the next village. Two hundred homes had been destroyed. The woman from Bangalore was much happier with this village. She said that it was a better use of her aid.

—*Akash Kapur*

WRONG NUMBER DEPT.
NOT DIRTY

Russell Jones is a forty-four-year-old art director who lives in Park Slope, Brooklyn. In the early winter of 1996, he and his wife began to receive some unusual phone calls late at night. They would pick up the receiver and a voice would shout "Yo, Dirty!" or just "Dirteee!" and then hang up. Jones was mystified; he thought that maybe his number had been written down in a bathroom stall somewhere. A few weeks later, Jones's young cousin, who was conversant in hip-hop, stopped by.

"You know that rapper Ol' Dirty Bastard?"

"Uh, not really."

"His real name is Russell Jones. That's why you get those calls."

"No way. It can't be."

It was. Russell Jones, a.k.a. Ol' Dirty Bastard, had just left the group Wu-Tang Clan and had a hit song called "Brooklyn Zoo." He called himself Ol' Dirty Bastard because "there ain't no father to his style"—a distinctive combination of song and rap. Something of a folk hero, O.D.B. would occasionally return to his old Brooklyn neighborhood, East New York, and hand out money on the streets. He also got into a lot of trouble—an assault charge, a bullet in the stomach. His fans would dial information and ask for the number of Russell Jones in Brooklyn. They'd get the wrong Russell Jones, the one who describes himself as "meek" and "white."

The conversations often unfolded this way:

"Yo, Ol' Dirty?"

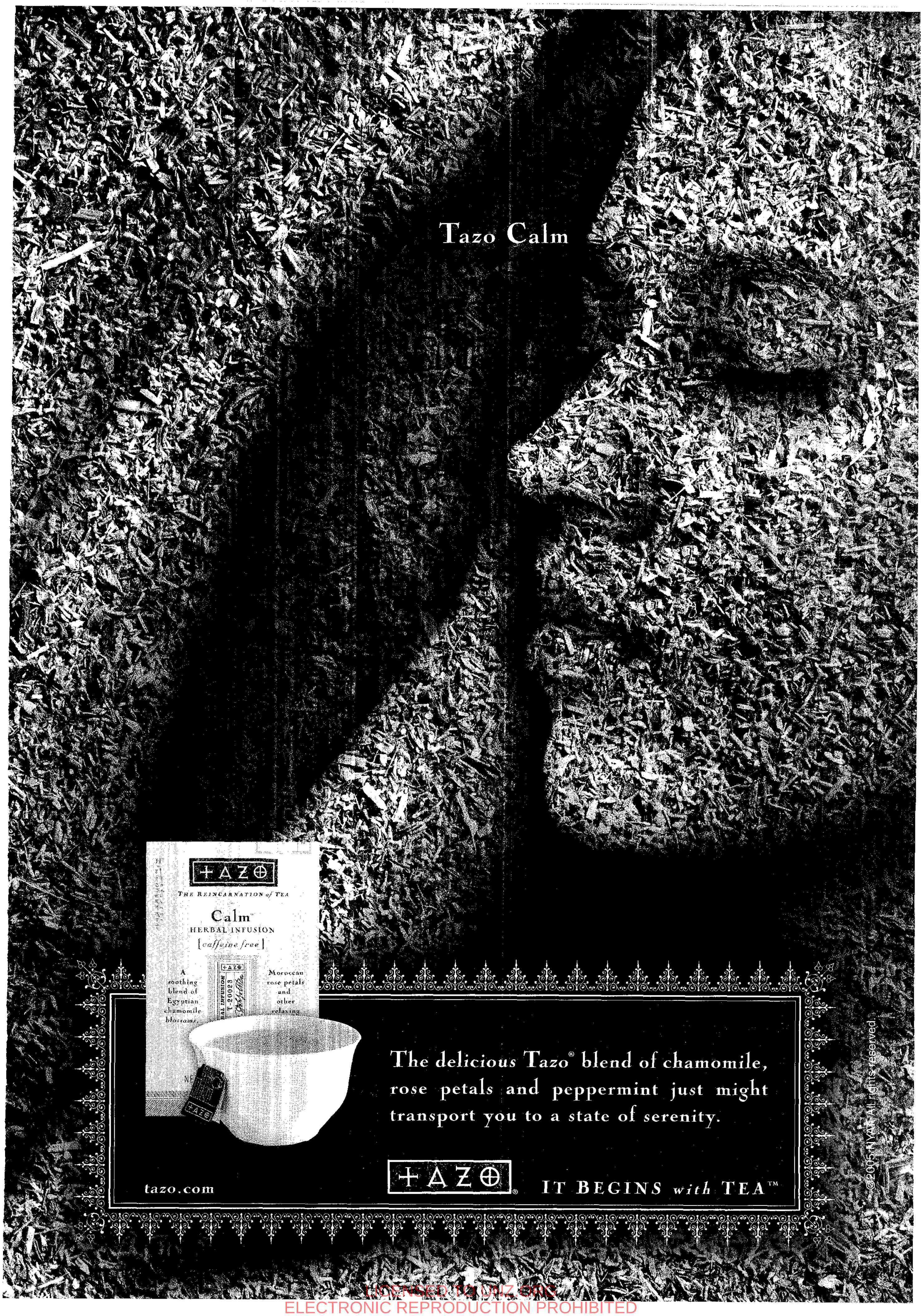
"No, this is not Ol' Dirty, but you have reached Russell Jones."

"Oh, are you going to see him later?"

The callers always assumed that Jones would somehow run into O.D.B., even after he said he couldn't rap. Most refused to believe him. "Where you at? I'm gonna come over and hang out with you," they'd say. "Trust me, you'll be very disappointed when you see me," Jones would reply. He thought about getting an unlisted number, but, as a freelance illustrator, he needed to be in the book. If he hung up on the callers, they just called back. Eventually, he decided to enjoy the fruits of mistaken identity. There were the drunken admirers from Denmark and the little girl who wanted to do a school report about O.D.B. and his accomplishments. The most frequent calls were from young women who expressed a desire to break into the music business.

Like a bad French movie, Jones's life began to intersect with O.D.B.'s in other ways. He learned that O.D.B.'s mother lived on a nearby street, and that he and O.D.B. belonged to the same video store. Jones really didn't mind the notoriety of being paired with the self-destructive rapper. After all, he was much better off than his brother Tom Jones. "His life in the seventies was a living hell."

Jones began to notice a pattern in the calls. There would be a few weeks of calm, and then the phone would start ringing five or six times a night. When this happened, Jones would say to his wife, "I think the O.D.B. did something." During these years, O.D.B. seemingly couldn't finish a day without getting arrested and thrown in jail. His incarceration did not stop the fans from dialling. "Ol' Dirty is in prison!" "Yeah, I know. It's harsh." Even people who should know where to find O.D.B. began to have trouble tracking him down. *Vibe* wanted to send a limousine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to the house. And then there was a call from a tuba-voiced man:

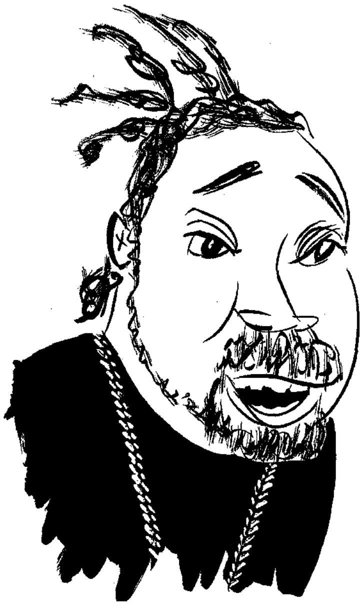
"This is Method." Methane? Methadone? "Yo, Rusty, how you been, we need to get together."

"I'm Russell Jones but not who you think I am."

A pause. "O.K., well, tell my man to call me."

After further protestations, Jones took down the number. Later, he learned that he had been talking to the hip-hop artist Method Man.

Of late, O.D.B. had been making a comeback. Two months ago, he was recording new songs and had finished shooting a reality TV show (in which a contestant had to stay within ten feet of him for a week) when he collapsed in a recording studio and died. He had overdosed on cocaine and painkillers. When the news broke, Jones took calls from distraught fans: "He was amazing. He was original." Eric, a self-described rapper from the West Coast, phoned twice: "When you see the family, extend my condolences." Jones thought about going to the funeral, but decided against it.



Ol' Dirty Bastard

Over the years of answering these calls, Jones often wondered how the Dirty Bastard was doing. One day, he ran into him on the street. "It was an incredible moment," Jones recalled. "There was this guy with mini-dreads who had his shirt off. He was wearing cutoff overalls and Timberland boots without socks. He was lurching around with these huge wide steps. You could tell he was a star. You couldn't take your eyes off him. He had charisma. And I said to myself, 'That's Russell Jones. That's the O.D.B.' "

—*Michael Agger*

DEPT. OF INQUIRY
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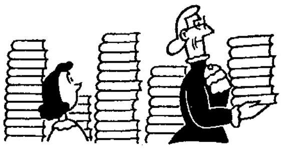


The New-York Historical Society celebrates its two hundredth anniversary this year, having survived, in recent decades, the threat of bankruptcy and the selling off of part of its collections. In spite of these reversals, demand has not slackened for at least one of the society's public services: that of providing answers to arcane questions about New York City to which even the powers of Google have failed to come up with an adequate response.

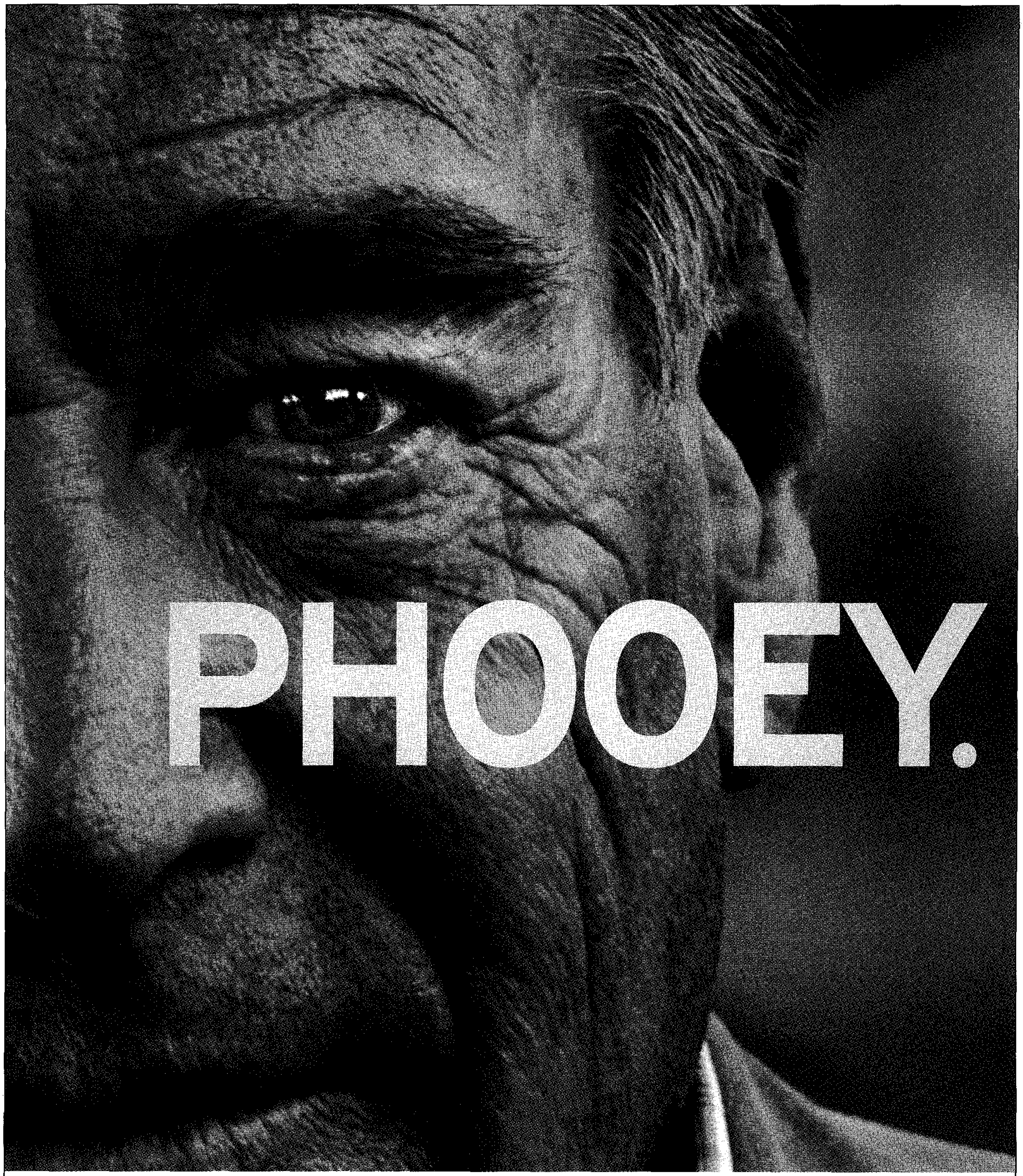
The questions fielded by the Historical Society's team of three librarians, and the answers gleaned from the society's collection of two million manuscripts, three hundred and fifty thousand books and pamphlets, and fifteen thousand maps and atlases, are the stuff of dinner-table pontification and barroom bets. In which apartment at 55 West Eighth Street did Jimi Hendrix live? (Unanswerable, unfortunately, without rental records.) How do you pronounce Coenties Slip? (The library doesn't have a definitive answer, though it does possess a card file with a reference to a letter from 1915 in which the writer asserts, "I have recently obtained confirmation of the pronunciation 'Quinches,' as being the correct New York-Dutch version.") Did Robert Moses interfere with the plans to build the Guggenheim Museum? (This one asked, presumably, by the one New Yorker who doesn't have a copy of Robert A. Caro's "The Power Broker" on his or her bookshelf.)

The most commonly asked question is about the origin of the term "the Big Apple." (It seems to have started with African-American stable-hands in New Orleans in the nineteen-twenties; an earlier usage of the term, in a 1909 collection of vignettes called "The Wayfarer in New York," is, according to the Historical Society's official line, a red herring.) The second most commonly asked question is why the name "New-York Historical Society" has a hyphen. That's the original spelling of New York, apparently, established long before anyone thought of applying fruit metaphors to the city.

The librarians are often asked to identify ancient-looking objects that were made in New York and whose purpose has become obscure. Mariam Touba, a reference librarian, was once presented with a picture of an implement comprising a narrow copper basin fitted with several small pulleys, dredged up from the galleys of the wreck of the Empress of Ireland, a steamship that sank in the St. Lawrence River in 1914. She determined that it had been an egg-boiling device equipped with an automatic timer—an implement entirely ready, you might think, for revival by Restoration Hardware. One of the more peculiar populations of visitors to the reading room, according to Nina Nazionale, the library's interim director, are treasure-hunting divers, who are extremely cagey about the ends to which their research will be put. "They want the Hussar file," Nazionale said, referring to a Revolutionary War-era pay ship that sank in 1780 at Hell Gate, in the East River, and has never been recovered, despite the file's showing considerable signs of wear.

The release of New York-centric movies usually prompts a spate of related inquiries. After "Gangs of New York" came out, the society's librarians became, of necessity, instant experts in the history of Five Points. A similar barrage of questions will likely be generated by the remake of "King Kong," which is being directed by Peter Jackson, the maestro of the "Lord of the Rings" movies. The film's researchers have already been to the Historical Society, seeking plans of the façades of every building along the stretch of Fifth Avenue to be featured in the movie, a request that Nazionale suggested might be best fulfilled at the Municipal Archives, where copies of such photographs can be ordered for forty dollars apiece. "The researcher said, 'Forty dollars is expensive,' " Nazionale said. Should anyone call to ask the name of the stingiest producers ever to film in New York City, now she has an answer.

—*Rebecca Mead*



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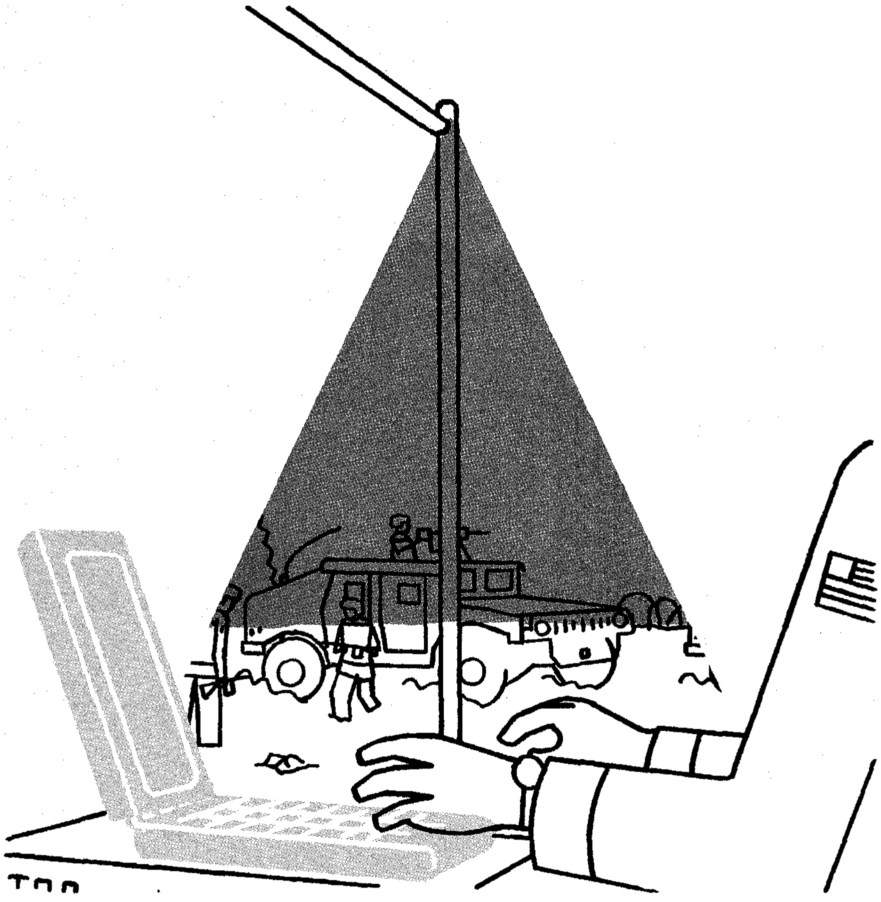
ANNALS OF WAR

BATTLE LESSONS

What the generals don't know.

BY DAN BAUM

During the early weeks of the Iraq war, the television set in my office was tuned all day to CNN, with the sound muted. On the morning of April 3rd, as the Army and the Marines were closing in on Baghdad, I happened to look up at what appeared to be a disaster in the making. A small unit of American soldiers was walking along a street in Najaf when hundreds of Iraqis poured out of the buildings on either side. Fists waving, throats taut, they pressed in on the Americans, who glanced at one another in terror. I reached for the remote and turned up the sound. The Iraqis were shrieking, frantic with rage. From the way the lens was lurching, the cameraman seemed as frightened as the soldiers. This is it, I thought. A shot will come from somewhere, the Americans will open fire, and the world will witness the My Lai massacre of the Iraq war. At that moment, an American officer stepped through the crowd holding his rifle high over his head with the barrel pointed to the ground. Against the backdrop of the seething crowd, it was a striking gesture—almost Biblical. "Take a knee," the officer said, impassive behind surfer sunglasses. The soldiers looked at him as if he were crazy. Then, one after another, swaying in their bulky body armor and gear, they knelt before the boiling crowd and pointed their guns at the ground. The Iraqis fell silent, and their anger subsided. The officer ordered his men to withdraw.



In Iraq, the Army's innovative junior officers have learned to learn from each other.

LAURENT CILLUFFO

It took two months to track down Lieutenant Colonel Chris Hughes, who by then had been rotated home. He called from his father's house, in Red Oak, Iowa, en route to study at the Army War College, in Pennsylvania. I wanted to know who had taught him to tame a crowd by pointing his rifle muzzle down and having his men kneel. Were those gestures peculiar to Iraq? To Islam? My questions barely made sense to Hughes. In an unassuming, persistent Iowa tone, he assured me that nobody had prepared him for an angry crowd in an Arab country, much less the tribal complexities of Najaf. Army officers learn in a general way to use a helicopter's rotor wash to drive away a crowd, he explained. Or they fire warning shots. "Problem with that is, the next thing you have to do is shoot them in the chest." Hughes had been trying that day to get in touch with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, a delicate task that the Army considered politically crucial. American gunfire would have made it impossible. The Iraqis already felt that the Americans were disrespecting their mosque. The obvious solution, to Hughes, was a gesture of respect.

Hughes made it sound obvious, but, shortly before the Americans invaded Iraq, the Army had concluded that its officers lacked the ability to do precisely what he did: innovate and think creatively. In 2000, the new Army Chief of Staff, General Eric Shinseki, was determined to shake up the Army and suspected that about half of a soldier's training was meaningless and "non-essential." The job of figuring out which half went to Lieutenant Colonel Leonard Wong (retired), a research professor of military strategy at the Army War College. At forty-five, Wong is handsome and voluble, with the air of a man who makes his living prodding the comfortable. Wong found that the problem was not "bogus" training exercises but worthwhile training being handled in such a way as to stifle fresh thinking. The Army had so loaded training schedules with doctrinaire requirements and standardized procedures that unit commanders had no time—or need—to think for themselves. The service was encouraging "reactive instead of proactive thought, compliance instead of creativity, and adherence instead of audacity," Wong wrote in his report. As one captain put it to him, "They're giving me the egg and telling me how to suck it."

Wong's findings impressed Shinseki, who in February of 2001 sent him into the lion's den of a two-star generals' conference to present his research. Some of the generals were suspicious, others openly hostile. "I sympathize," Wong told me. "When you allow people to innovate and to lead, you invite failure." Wong's report generated no policy changes, but, by stating plainly what many knew instinctively, it started the Army thinking about how to free up its junior officers' decision-making.

Then came Iraq. Every war is different from the last, with its own special learning curve, but there is a growing sense within the Army that Iraq signals something more significant. In the American Civil War, Army manuals taught Napoleonic tactics, like close-order formations, even though they were suicidal against rifled muskets that could kill accurately at three hundred yards. In the First World War, the French, British, and German troops persisted in attempting to storm trenches before recognizing the defensive supremacy of the machine gun. In Iraq, the Army's marquee high-tech weapons are often sidelined while the enemy kills and maims Americans with bombs wired to garage-door openers or doorbells. Even more important, the Army is facing an enemy whose motivation it doesn't understand. "I don't think there's one single person in the Army or the intelligence community that can break down the demographics of the enemy we're facing," an Airborne captain named Daniel Morgan told me. "You can't tell whether you're dealing with a former Baathist, a common criminal, a foreign terrorist, or devout believers."

Wong flew to Baghdad last April, a year after the supposed cessation of "major combat operations," to find out how the "reactive" and "compliant" junior officers the Army had trained were performing amid the insurgency. He and an active-duty officer flew to bases all over Iraq, interviewing lieutenants, who lead platoons of about thirty soldiers, and captains, who command companies of one to two hundred. These officers, scrambling to bring order to Mosul, Fallujah, and Baghdad, had been trained and equipped to fight against numbered, mechanized regiments in open-maneuver warfare. They had been taught to avoid

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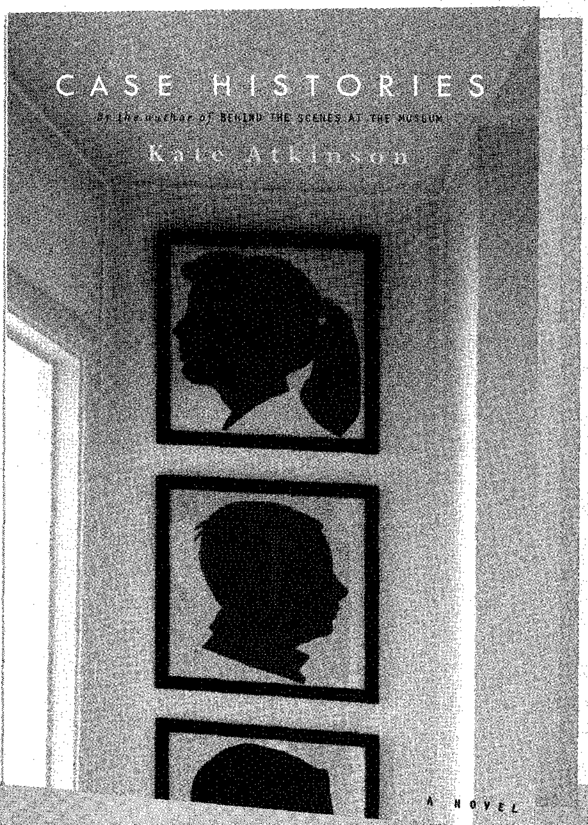

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fighting in cities at all costs. Few had received pre-deployment training in improvised explosive devices, or I.E.D.s, the insurgents' signature weapon. None had received any but the most rudimentary instruction in the Arabic language or in Iraqi culture. They were perhaps the most isolated occupation force in history; there are no bars or brothels in Baghdad where Americans can relax, no place off the base for Americans to remove their body armor in the presence of locals. Every encounter was potentially hostile. The chronic shortage of troops and shifting phases of fighting and reconstruction forced soldiers into jobs for which they weren't prepared; Wong found field artillerymen, tankers, and engineers serving as infantrymen, while infantrymen were building sewer systems and running town councils. All were working with what Wong calls "a surprising lack of detailed guidance from higher headquarters." In short, the Iraq that Wong found is precisely the kind of unpredictable environment in which a cohort of hidebound and inflexible officers would prove disastrous.

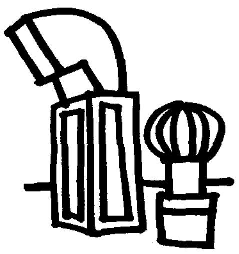
Yet he found the opposite. Platoon and company commanders were exercising their initiative to the point of occasional genius. Whatever else the Iraq war is doing to American power and prestige, it is producing the creative and flexible junior officers that the Army's training could not.

There may be a generational explanation. While most high-ranking officers are baby boomers, most lieutenants and captains are of Generation X, born in the mid-sixties or after. Gen X officers, often the product of single-parent homes or homes in which both parents worked, are markedly more self-reliant and confident of their abilities than their baby-boomer superiors, according to Army surveys of both groups. Baby boomers moved up the ranks during the comfortable clarity of the Cold War, but the Gen Xers came of age during messy peacekeeping missions in Kosovo, Bosnia, Somalia, and Haiti. Gen Xers are notoriously unimpressed by rank, as Donald Rumsfeld discovered in December, when enlisted soldiers questioned him sharply about the lack of armor on their vehicles. This turns out to be a positive development for the Army, because the exigencies of the Iraq war are forcing the decision-making downward; tank captains tell of being handed authority, mid-battle, for tasks that used to be reserved for colonels, such as directing helicopter close-air support.

The younger officers have another advantage over their superiors: they grew up with the Internet, and have created for themselves, in their spare time, a means of sharing with one another, online, information that the Army does not control. The "slackers" in the junior-officer corps are turning out to be just what the Army needs in the chaos of Iraq. Instead of looking up to the Army for instructions, they are teaching themselves how to fight the war. The Army, to its credit, stays out of their way.

Prior to the Second World War, officers heading into combat buttonholed veterans or gleaned what they could over evening beers at the Officers' Club to fill holes in their training. After Guadalcanal, the Army knocked together the insights of soldiers in combat and published them in cheap newsprint booklets called "The Mailing List." The booklets were imprecise, slow to arrive in the field, and unidirectional. "Teach not to waste ammunition," wrote one Marine colonel. "The Japanese fire is not always aimed," a sergeant wrote. "It is harassing fire and scares recruits." The system for recycling combat experience didn't improve much for the next forty years.

Then, in October, 1983, came Operation Urgent Fury, against the government of Grenada, which should have been relatively straightforward but instead was a mess. Communications were so poor that soldiers had to rely on pay phones. Intelligence was so spotty that troops used tourist maps to find their way around the island. Nineteen service members died in the operation, some needlessly. In response, the Army opened the Center for Army Lessons Learned—or CALL—at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. CALL was supposed to gather and distribute more efficiently the insights that soldiers glean from battle. Colonel Larry Saul, who says he is "one of about a hundred Vietnam vets still on active duty," is CALL's director. Dark-haired at fifty-four, he shares with most of his colleagues a strikingly direct manner of speaking. For efficiency of conversation, Army officers are tough to beat. Trained to convey critical information under stress, they enunciate like radio announcers, in complete, unhesitating sentences. Moreover, they tend to be good listeners, with a refreshing ability—and willingness—to get to the nub of a difficult issue. Ask an Army officer a painful question and he or she will answer it, provided it doesn't involve secrets, with a kind of Boy Scout candor all but unknown in, say, the corporate or political realm. I asked Saul what lessons the Army has learned in Iraq, and he said, "Not much, because lessons learned, in past tense, means you've modified behavior. Until you demonstrate changed behavior, you haven't learned a lesson."



In its early days, the lessons came not from combat but from the training centers in California and Louisiana where troops go to experience a week or two of lifelike combat. CALL would ask trainers what mistakes were being repeated and would write up the results in four bulletins a year, which were then filed away and largely forgotten. The Web changed everything. During the battles of Bosnia and Kosovo, in 1993 and 1999, CALL placed "embeds"—full-time liaison officers—with the soldiers; it now has two in Afghanistan and five in Iraq, and also receives a flood of daily "after action reviews" from line officers. The reviews contain tips on everything from running field kitchens to avoiding mortar attacks. At Fort Leavenworth, thirty analysts, all of them military retirees, digest the reviews, identify trends, and reconcile the lessons with established Army doctrine. CALL still distributes lessons on paper—in binders, in booklets designed to fit in the cargo pocket of a soldier's fatigues, and on plasticized pocket cards. But the centerpiece of CALL is its Web site, which is restricted to military personnel, Defense Department civilians, and coalition allies. Mostly, officers use it before they are deployed, to train soldiers in Iraq-specific tactics. One CALL lesson on I.E.D.s, for example, opens with a video-game graphic of a Humvee hitting a mine and being fired upon by guerrillas: men scream, blood splatters. The segment ends with a car-

"We're still moving in."

• •

toon sergeant grading the answers to a test: "That's a go, soldier!" or "No go, soldier!" "Some of our soldiers are nineteen years old," Colonel Saul explained. "This has to be aimed at them." When CALL wants to distribute highly sensitive material, it uses the Secret Internet Protocol Router Network, or SIPRNET. SIPRNET is walled off from the civilian Internet; its messages travel over separate wires, and only special computers can reach it. (In Iraq, it is available at the battalion level, but rarely at the company level.)

The Army is struggling to figure out the Iraq war even while it's up to its neck in it. Lieutenant Colonel Ernie Benner is one of about eighty members of the Joint I.E.D. Defeat Task Force, which the Defense Department created in July to analyze the insurgents' maddeningly simple yet deadly homemade bombs. "There is no technology silver bullet," Benner told me when we spoke in a windowless conference room at the Pentagon. The task force posts on SIPRNET intelligence that it gathers from all four military services and a hundred and thirty-three different government and private agencies, ranging from the F.B.I. and the Agency for International Development to Kellogg Brown & Root. It uses F.B.I.-style forensics on bombs and fragments to trace their makers and financiers, and it looks for techniques that soldiers can use to spot and disarm them. I.E.D.s first appeared in large numbers along roadsides during an insurgent offensive in Baghdad, in November, 2003, during Ramadan, Benner said. They have also been found in the carcasses of dogs, in venders' carts, and strapped behind highway guardrails. Benner showed me a picture of a road sign that had a big bomb hidden inside it. The sign read "Welcome to Fallujah." Lately, suicide bombers have driven I.E.D.s into control points and Iraqi police stations, and, in September, the tactics for delivering I.E.D.s mutated into what Benner calls moving-vehicle-on-moving-vehicle attacks: a car zips between two vehicles in a rolling convoy and explodes. "The field team investigated and wrote up what tactics, techniques, and procedures could defeat that," Benner said, "and within twenty-four hours they were disseminated into training for units going to Iraq."

The problem with both CALL and the I.E.D. Task Force is that their information is as unidirectional as "The Mailing List" in the Second World War. The Army identifies a need, prepares a response, and hands it down from the top. Officers in the field can e-mail questions to CALL, and usually get a response within twenty-four hours, but most officers told me that the information often seems stale or, having been processed in the maw of Army doctrine, irrelevant. The war in Iraq is so confusing and it changes so fast that there's often no time to wait for carefully vetted and spoon-fed advice. So officers look for help elsewhere.

Majors Nate Allen and Tony Burgess became friends at West Point in the nineteen-eighties, and at the end of the nineties they found themselves commanding companies in separate battalions in the same Hawaii-based brigade. Commanding a company is often described as the best job in the Army; a company is big enough to be powerful and small enough to be intimate. But the daily puzzles a company commander faces, even in peacetime, are dizzying, and both Allen and Burgess felt isolated. "If I had a good idea about how to do something, there was no natural way to share it," Allen said. "I'd have to pass it up, and it would have to be blessed two levels above me, and then passed down to Tony." Luckily, they lived next door to each other and spent many evenings sitting on Allen's front porch comparing notes. "How are things going with your first sergeant?" one would ask. Or "How are you dealing with the wives?" "At some point, we realized this conversation was having a positive impact on our units, and we wanted to pass it along," Allen told me. They wrote a book about commanding a company, "Taking the Guidon," which they posted on a Web site. Because of the Internet, what had started as a one-way transfer of information—a book—quickly became a conversation.

"Once you start a project, amazing people start to join," Allen said. Among them was a captain based at West Point who was familiar with a Web site called Alloutdoors.com, which lets sportsmen post questions and solicit advice about everything from how to skin a squirrel by yanking on its tail to how to call a turkey by blowing on a wing bone. Burgess and Allen liked the Alloutdoors model, which allows for lots of unmediated, real-time cross-chat and debate. They figured that such a site for company commanders would replicate, in cyberspace, their front porch.

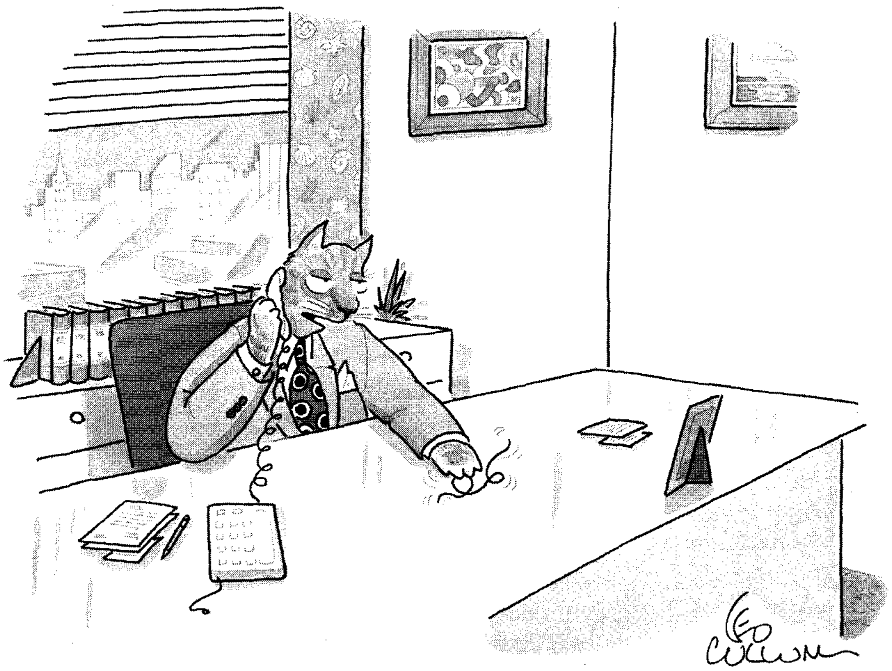
In March of 2000, with the help of a Web-savvy West Point classmate and their own savings, they put up a site on the civilian Internet called Companycommand.com. It didn't occur to them to ask the Army for permission or support. Companycommand was an affront to protocol. The Army way was to monitor and vet every posting to prevent secrets from being revealed, but Allen and Burgess figured that captains were smart enough to police themselves and not compromise security. Soon after the site went up, a lieutenant colonel phoned one of the Web site's operators and advised them to get a lawyer, because he didn't want to see "good officers crash and burn." A year later, Allen and Burgess started a second Web site, for lieutenants, Platoonleader.org.

The sites, which are accessible to captains and lieutenants with a password, are windows onto the job of commanding soldiers and onto the unfathomable complexities of fighting urban guerrillas. Companycommand is divided into twelve areas, including Training, Warfighting, and Soldiers and Families, each of which is broken into discussion threads on everything from mortar attacks to grief counselling and dishonest sergeants. Some discussions are quite raw. Captains post comments on coping with fear, on motivating soldiers to break the taboo against killing, and on counselling suicidal soldiers. They advise each other on how to kick in doors and how to handle pregnant subordinates. Most captains now have access to the Internet at even the most remote bases in Iraq, and many say they'll find at least ten or fifteen minutes every day to check the site. They post tricks they've learned or ask questions like this, which set off months of responses: "What has anyone tried to do to alleviate the mortar attacks on their forward operating bases?" Here are snippets of conversations posted on Companycommand and Platoonleader in the past year:

> Never travel in a convoy of less than four vehicles. Do not let a casualty take your focus away from a combat engagement. Give your driver your 9mm, and carry their M16/M4. Tootsie Rolls are quite nice; Jolly Ranchers will get all nasty and sticky though. If a person is responsible for the death of an individual, they do not attend during the three days of mourning; that is why if we kill an individual in sector, we are not welcome during the mourning period. Soldiers need reflexive and quick-fire training, using burst fire. If they're shooting five to seven mortar rounds into your forward operating base, whatever you're doing needs to be readjusted. The more aggressive you look and the faster you are, the less likely the enemy will mess with you. It is okay to tell your soldiers what the regulation is; but as a commander, you should make the effort to get the soldier home for the birth. A single wall of sandbags will not stop any significant munitions. Take pictures of everything and even, maybe more importantly, everyone. The right photo in the right hands can absolutely make the difference. It's not always easy to reach the pistol when in the thigh holster, especially in an up-armored humvee. If they accept you into the tent, by custom they are accepting responsibility for your safety and by keeping on the body armor, you are sending a signal that you do not trust them. If tea or coffee are offered, be sure to accept the items with the right hand. Do not look at your watch when in the tent. Have the unit invest in Wiley X's—these sunglasses also serve as sun-wind-dust goggles. Supply each soldier with one tourniquet; we use a mini-ratchet strap that is one inch wide and long enough to wrap around the thigh of a soldier. Cotton holds water. Even with the best socks, and plenty of foot powder, your feet are likely to start peeling like you've never experienced. You're more likely to be injured by not wearing a seatbelt than from enemy activity. You need to train your soldiers to aim, fire, and kill. The average local is terrible at trying to read a map; however they do understand sketches—the simpler the better. The second you see your soldiers start to lose interest, or roll their eyes, or not pay attention, your S2 has failed and you, your soldiers, and the mission are in danger. Vary the departure and return times, vary the routes even if the route includes a U turn, doesn't make sense, etc. Let's talk about what not to bring: perishable food, lighter fluid, porn, alcohol, or personal weapons. But you might be able to get away with a Playboy or two as long as you're not stupid about it. The 9mm round is too weak, go for headshots if you use it.

Captain Stephanie Gray was a twenty-four-year-old communications officer in Baghdad when, in January of 2004, she was abruptly ordered to serve as her battalion's adjutant, whose job is to manage pay, evaluation reports, and other personnel issues. She'd had minimal training. On Gray's first morning on her own, a call came in at nine-thirty informing her that one of her battalion's convoys had been struck by an I.E.D. in Sadr City. The commander, executive officer, and sergeant major—the battalion's entire leadership—jumped up and sped to the site, leaving Gray in the command tent. She got a call saying that Sergeant First Class Ricky Crockett had been killed—the unit's first death. "I knew there were a lot of things an adjutant needs to do when a soldier dies," she told me, "but I had no idea what." She logged onto Companycommand and clicked feverishly through the site looking for guidance. Finally she clicked "contact us" and explained her situation. "Within thirty minutes, I got my first response, and all day I got e-mails," she said. "Some were from active military and some retired. One was a chaplain. 'Look at this regulation,' they told me, or 'Here's what I tried.' I learned how to report it up, then look in the soldier's file and generate letters from the company commander, the battalion commander, and the brigade commanders to his family. . . . There were death-benefit papers to fill out, and on and on."

Two months before deploying to Iraq, Captain Raymond Kimball, of the Seventh Cavalry, learned from Company-



"Can I call you back? I'm with a piece of string."

command never to send a vehicle bound for Iraq to the docks before checking its hydraulic lines for leaks. "Even a little trace of hydraulic fluid means it can't be loaded on a ship or train," he told me. "The worst thing is, you deploy and find out in Iraq that your vehicle is still on the wharf in Jacksonville." Captain Jason Miseli learned to stuff a medic into the scout Humvee that travels miles ahead of his tanks, even if it meant hanging gear on the outside to make room. It was a nuisance, but it saved the life of Specialist Timothy Griffin. Lieutenant Brittany Meeks, who chose the military police as a woman's back door into combat and is in Baghdad, was advised by Platoonleader to memorize the "nine-line" procedure for summoning medical-evacuation helicopters. She took the precaution of writing the procedure on a slip of paper. In a hellish attack on a convoy last April, a soldier was gravely wounded by a rocket-propelled grenade that exploded close to his head. Amid the blood, the screaming, and two burning fuel tankers, the wounded man's buddies were having trouble remembering what to do, but Meeks pulled her notes on the procedure from her pocket.

Though Companycommand and Platoonleader require passwords, they could presumably be hacked, and a determined enemy could learn a good deal about how officers think. A lively discussion thread that began with a plea for "information, advice or comments . . . on convoy training" went on for months, with contradictory views on whether to lay sandbags on the floors of vehicles (they offer protection from mines, but wear out Humvees), admonitions to look upward as well as to the sides (guerrillas may shoot from rooftops and overpasses), and suggestions for replacing vehicles' canvas doors with 8-mm. steel ("It will stop AK-47 and most frag"). "Hey guys," one captain wrote. "Remember this is an open-source Web site. Everything you type is being read by the enemy."

Beyond the how-to details, the Web sites offer the comfort of connection to a brotherhood of officers who are trying to master the same impossible job. "Their stories prepare you mentally for what it is you'll be facing when you get here," Meeks wrote in a long e-mail from Iraq. "What they actually did is of limited value," Miseli said. "It's the why, and the thought process." Companycommand's membership more than doubled last year, to ten thousand, or more than a third of all captains in the Army; they went to the site sixty-seven thousand times and looked at more than a million pages.

Officer after officer told me that they use CALL when they have the leisure, but it's Companycommand or Platoonleader they check regularly and find most useful. CALL's director, Colonel Saul, wondered if "maybe captains shouldn't be spending so much time in front of their computer, but should be with their soldiers." He pointed out, however, that CALL itself has found Companycommand useful; earlier this year, CALL posted a request on Companycommand for advice on using interpreters in Iraq, eliciting replies that became a CALL lesson on the subject. Saul's ambivalence about the Web sites is emblematic of the Army's attitude. "Institutional education has three components," said Lieutenant Colonel Kelly Jordan, an active-duty officer who also runs the R.O.T.C. program at Notre Dame. "It's got to have a common curriculum, a dedicated cadre of trained instructors, and common experience." Companycommand and Platoonleader are free-for-alls of shared experience, with no designated interpreter. "What you get out of it may not be what I get out of it," Jordan said. "You may get the occasional Napoleon or Alexander the Great out of it, but it does nothing to raise the educational level of the officer corps."

Little by little, the Army is absorbing Companycommand.com and Platoonleader.org. In 2002, West Point put Platoonleader on its server, and a year later added Companycommand; both sites now have military addresses. The Army also began paying the Web site's expenses. It sent all four of its founders to graduate school to earn Ph.D.s, so that they can become professors at West Point, where they will run the sites as part of their jobs. And the Army is starting to pay the Web sites the sincerest form of flattery: in April, the commanding general of the First Cavalry Division, Major General Peter Chiarelli, ordered up a conversation site for his officers. Cavnet, as it's known, exists only on SIPRNET, and is vetted, as an official Army site. "We had a guy put up something that wasn't within the rules of engagement," Major Patrick Michaelis, who created the site, told me, "and within half an hour the staff judge-advocate guys put a response up." But, of all the Web-based means of sharing combat information, Cavnet is the most immediate. While CALL is used mostly in training units in the U.S., and both Companycommand and Platoonleader are intended to build leadership skills and share general tips and tricks about fighting in Iraq, Cavnet is oriented, Michaelis said, to "the next patrol, six to nine hours out." Lieutenant Keith Wilson, for example, read a "be on the look out" posting about insurgents who were wiring grenades behind posters of Moqtada al-Sadr, counting on Americans to detonate the explosives when they ripped the posters down. He spread the word among his men, and a few days later a soldier whom he'd sent to peel a poster off a wall peeked behind it first. Sure enough, a grenade was waiting.

"There go the people. I must follow them, for I am their leader," Alexandre Auguste Ledru-Rollin is said to have remarked during the 1848 revolutions in France. The Army finds itself in a similar relationship with its junior-officer corps. Leonard Wong worries that an institution as hierarchical and doctrinaire as the Army will have trouble reining in its young officers after the war. "Iraq has released the capabilities that our leaders had, but that we'd dulled and numbed previously," he said. "It's one thing for individuals to be nimble mentally. But can the Army as an institution be nimble enough to leverage them? Do we now sit these captains down and treat them as we used to? They all wear combat patches. Have we changed anything in the organization to respond to that? If you go to any school or unit, they'll say, 'Yes, we're doing things right,' but, really, the Army is struggling."

No matter how clever its captains and lieutenants are becoming in the face of the insurgency, the Army may never be able to declare victory in Iraq. Thirty years after the fall of Saigon, the military finds itself thrust into another war with limited public support, insufficient resources, and a murky definition of success. It remains to be seen whether its appetite for learning the lessons of Iraq will extend to analyzing how it got into such a war in the first place. When General Shinseki failed to persuade Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to allocate more troops to the initial effort, he appeared before the Senate Armed Services

Committee, where, under cover of answering a senator's question, he went public with his estimate that the war would require "several hundred thousand" troops. His move failed. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz called Shinseki's estimate "wildly off the mark," and the Army invaded Iraq with about a hundred thousand soldiers.

Marybeth Ulrich, a professor specializing in civil-military relations at the Army War College, said it's too soon for the Army to be analyzing whether Shinseki could have played his hand better, or whether generals might lobby more forcefully in the future. "The Army's pretty busy right now," she said. But the lieutenant colonels and colonels who attend the War College will eventually find themselves analyzing those early days of 2003, to learn, as she put it, "what steps were taken to get the Army's point of view across." Article II, Section 2 of the Constitution makes the military subordinate to the civilian leadership, and there's an undefined line between the two that the Army never crosses, Ulrich said. "Was the Army ten steps behind the line? Or did the Army go all the way to the line? I don't know."

Thomas White, who was fired from his job as Secretary of the Army in May of 2003 for clashing with Rumsfeld on a number of issues, including how many troops would be needed, told me that the lesson the Army needs to take away from the run-up to Iraq is precisely the one no officer wants to learn. "If I had it to do again, what Shinseki and I should have done is quit, and done so publicly," he said. White called it a measure of Rumsfeld's contempt for the Army that he didn't name a permanent Secretary of the Army to replace him until this past November. "To spend more than a year at war without a Secretary of the Army is unthinkable," White said.

A week before the Presidential election, the Association of the United States Army held its annual convention in Washington. Membership in the association is open both to Army personnel and the corporations that sell things to the Army, and the gathering transformed the lower level of the Washington Convention Center into an arms bazaar. Attractive women posed fetchingly beside Bradley Fighting Vehicles, Volvo displayed its trucks, Barrett Firearms showed off its new .50-calibre sniper rifles, and the Gallup Organization offered an array of "business improvement services." Upstairs, professional-development experts gave officers tips on everything from "actionable intelligence" to unit finance. Officers mingled in the hallways in dress-green droves, those who had been in combat distinguished by unit patches on the right arm rather than the left. The talk of the convention was a book published in 1997 that the officer corps has recently rediscovered. Many carried the volume under their arms, and no fewer than six urged me to read it: "Dereliction of Duty," written by an Army major named H. R. McMaster. Using once classified Vietnam-era documents, McMaster finds fault not just with Robert McNamara, then the Secretary of Defense, who dismissed warnings from the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the Vietnam War would be hard to win, but with the four Chiefs themselves, who were complicit, because they failed to publicly voice their misgivings. "Each one of those four went to their graves thinking they didn't do enough to protest," White told me. "They should have put their stars on the table and said, 'We won't be part of this.' "

The officers fighting in Iraq are, most of the time, remarkably enthusiastic. This is their war, the only one they may get in their careers. It follows an attack on the United States, even if the connection between the attack and the war has been questioned. Within the tiny sliver of the war each sees, examples of brilliance and bravery abound. They're proud to be a part of "the most beautiful Army in the history of the world," as one recently returned captain put it; he praised his immediate commander for wisdom and compassion, and his company for being so disciplined and professional that it could turn off the violence "like a good hunting dog." They brag about the Q36, a computerized weapon system that is so sophisticated it can spot an enemy mortar or rocket in midair, trace its trajectory backward, and fire a response before the enemy round lands. But they will also tell you that the war is excruciating. Despite their Buck Rogers technology, they are losing friends to weapons made from RadioShack gizmos, and the people they've been sent to help seem to hate them more every day. They can't imagine when or how they will earn a victory parade. ♦

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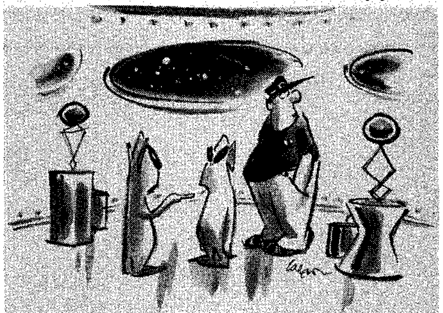
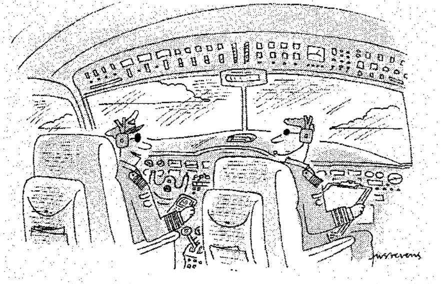
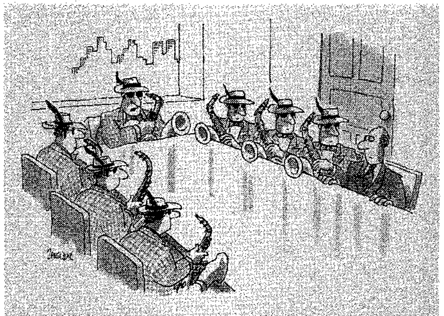


"You abducted him—you feed him."



"This is so cool! I'm flying this thing completely on my Palm pilot!"



"Damn it, Hopkins, didn't you get yesterday's memo?"

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1992 HOUSE

BY BILLY FROLICK

Introduction:

The assignment for Mrs. Stanfill's eighth-grade social-studies class was to pick a year in U.S. history and live for a week as if it were that year, without any of the conveniences available in today's modern society. I chose 1992, and for extra credit I persuaded my family to participate in the experiment along with me. Bill Clinton was elected President in 1992. A postage stamp cost twenty-nine cents, and Whitey (sp?) Houston had a No. 1 song with "I Will Always Love You," from a movie starring someone named Kevin Costner, on whom my mother apparently had a major crush.

Scientific controls:

My brother Chris was the most reluctant to participate in the project, as he is way obsessed with the new Maroon 5 CD that he downloaded and didn't like having to listen to crud like Billy Ray Cyrus and Boyz II Men for the duration of the control period. He has a massive DVD collection, which was out of bounds, too, given that DVDs had not been invented in the olden days of 1992. Though Chris has an abiding attachment to one of the girls on "The Real World: Philadelphia," I told him that, for the sake of historical verisimilitude, he had to learn to live without her—and TiVo or his iPod—for a week.

My stepdad Larry's reaction to the assignment was interesting. He said that maybe he'd go out of town to play golf for the week of the experiment because he wasn't actually "in the picture" in 1992. My mom nixed that suggestion.

Since the Internet was not in common use back then, Larry needed to check his stocks in the newspaper, which he had to start buying at Starbucks because he usually reads the news online. Thank God Starbucks was around in 1992. (I think. Not sure, and, under the terms of the experiment, I couldn't Google it.) But I do know that he couldn't order his usual caramel macchiato, because evidently in 1992 Starbucks barely even served coffee, let alone specialty drinks!!!!

My mom had a "procedure" scheduled for the week of the project and asked if I would make an exception for her, because my cousin Sharon's bat mitzvah was less than a month away and my mom wanted to make sure she looked O.K. in the pictures. It's too bad, because they definitely had bat mitzvahs and photography in 1992. But Botox was not readily available.

So, to keep the integrity of the research project intact, I denied her request and called Dr. Mussman (on a landline—duh!) to cancel her appointment. By the time she found out and called Dr. Mussman back, the slot was filled, and my mom and I became engaged in a significant altercation. As domestic conflict no doubt existed in 1992, this worked well within the parameters of the experiment. My mother wanted to punish me by depriving me of something that I care about, but just about everything that's important to me was basically already off limits for the week anyway.

I learned that one of the biggest hardships endured by people back in 1992 was not being able to use cell phones. At first, I had thought that maybe I could just cut back on the number of calls I made, thinking that usage plans were more limited. However, my research (at the library!) unearthed the fact that cell phones really were not in widespread use back then; there were only humongous car-phone versions, prevalent among early executives in the hip-hop industry.

Attending school for a week without my cell phone aroused feelings of depression. It seemed like everyone around me was text-messaging each other, and after a while I became convinced that they were text-messaging about me. I felt really humiliated, and it made me appreciate the world I live in today.

Research segment:

Not having the use of a cell phone piqued my curiosity regarding how schoolchildren communicated all those years ago. Since my mother was not speaking to me and Larry wasn't around (he did end up going to Myrtle Beach), I turned to primary sources (in the form of classic cinema) for answers. I found "The Breakfast Club" and "Pretty in Pink" in the library—on *videotape*. Through studying these movies, I learned that back in the eighties and nineties students would hand-write things on little pieces of paper called "notes" and try to pass them to each other in class without getting caught.

Upon my return to school, no one wanted to engage in this practice with me because they were all text-messaging each other (probably about me).

Basic survival observations:

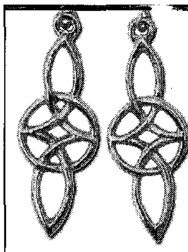
During the period of the experiment, my family subsisted on bread, pasta, rice, and potatoes, just as people did before the turn of the century. My mother said that if you had mentioned food combining or wheat intolerance back in 1992 they might have thrown you into a pond to see if you floated. I have no idea what that means, or who "they" are, but it was the first thing she had said to me in three days and I wanted to avoid another altercation, so I wrote it down.

I discovered that eating so much starch was giving me severe headaches. This, I felt, might explain some of the heinous stuff that was happening in the world back in 1992—weirdos like Ross Perot and Jeffrey Dahmer, or all the rioting that went down in Los Angeles that year. Maybe the grunge look, too.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, 1992 was clearly a very confusing, difficult time in which to live in the United States of America. Having to use landlines and eat carbohydrates were hardships for the people to endure, but Americans are nothing if not resilient. If I had been a teen-ager in 1992, I would have been really challenged to find alternative ways to keep my life interesting, stay thin, and communicate with my peers.

Speaking of which, someone is text-messaging me. I'm *so* grateful to live in 2005! :) ♦



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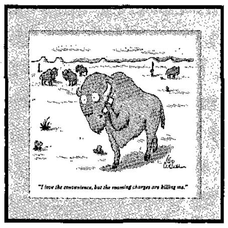

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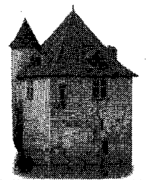

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PERSONAL HISTORY

LUNCH AT THE BILTMORE

An outing with my father.

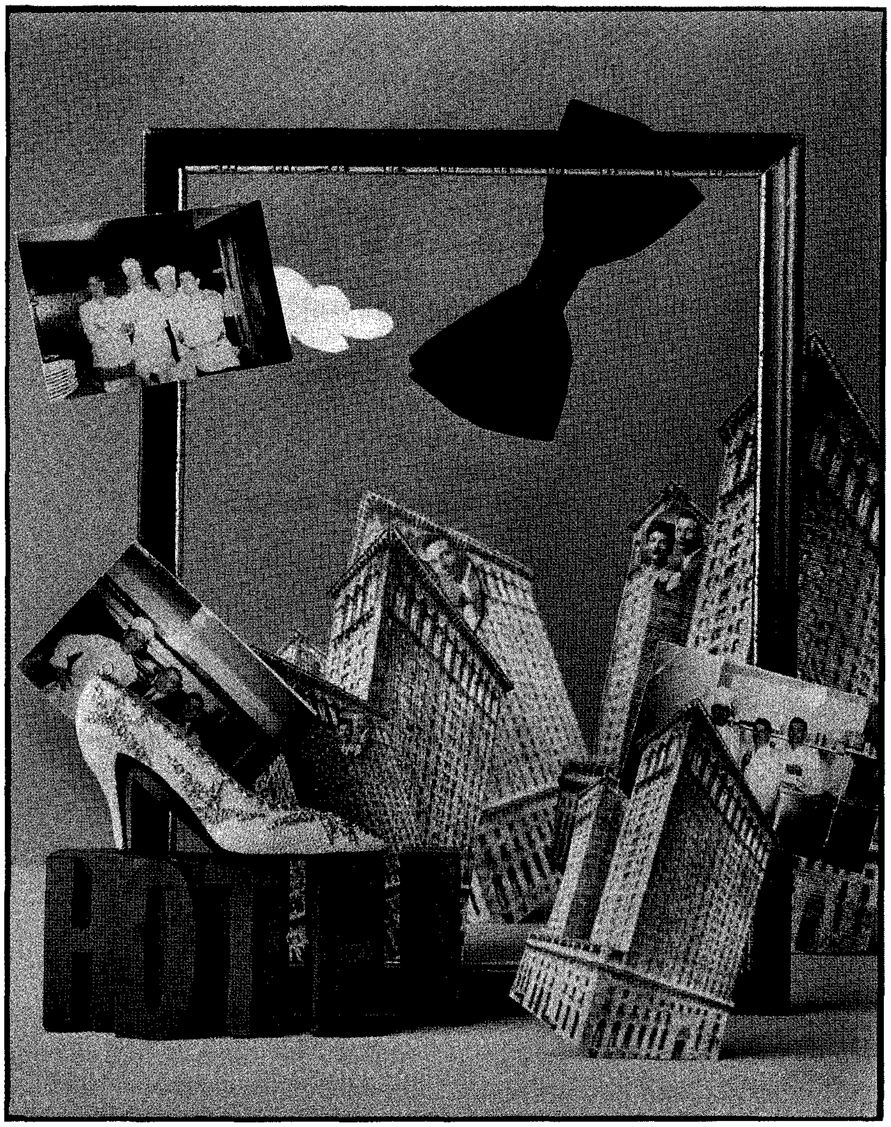
BY OSCAR HIJUELOS

In the autumn of 1959, my father and I were quite a pair: at forty-six, he was recovering from his first heart attack, and I, at the age of eight, after having contracted a near-fatal kidney disease during a journey I'd made to Cuba with my mother, a few years earlier, was still being carefully watched over, particularly when it came to what I could eat. During that trip, perhaps on my aunt María's farm, in Oriente, I had ingested something—a piece of undercooked suckling pig (*lechón*) or a sip of contaminated water—that had left me passing blood and bloated with edema. Back in New York, at St. Luke's Hospital, I was given a diagnosis of nephritis and packed off to a convalescent institution for children in Westchester, where I stayed, alone, except for weekend visits, for more than a year. I was still on a strict diet when I came home, in the summer of 1957, to an apartment on West 118th Street that, however humbly appointed with secondhand furnishings and limited amenities—we did not even have a telephone—never went lacking for food. In those days, my father worked in the Biltmore Hotel, down on Forty-third Street and Madison Avenue, a grand establishment that had a half-dozen restaurants, among them the Men's Bar, where he was a cook.

Working the 5 to 3 shift, my father never made very much money, even with overtime, but he did have an arrangement with the butchers and the baker in the hotel which allowed him to bring home all kinds of food that he could not otherwise have afforded. Each afternoon when he came home, a vague scent of Old Spice, cigarettes, meat, and blood about him, he would head straight for our cramped little kitchen, where the refrigerator buzzed loudly. Then from inside his shirt he would remove several packages wrapped in butcher paper, which had sometimes bled through and left runny red blotches on his clothes. He'd put the packages down on the table, light a cigarette, and open a bottle of beer, while my mother, who prepared most of our meals, looked over their contents: filets mignons, sirloin steaks, pork chops and lamb chops, breaded veal cutlets (*bistec empanadas*, as we called them), along with all kinds of cold cuts (pounds of freshly sliced French ham and turkey breast, slabs of Swiss cheese), Italian sausages, bags of shrimp, bricks of Hotel Bar butter and dark German chocolate, and, occasionally, a box of pastries—none of which the doctors at St. Luke's allowed me to eat.

On Sunday afternoons, our apartment filled with guests from all over the city, and my father presided over the kitchen preparing his favorite Cuban dishes—pots of *arroz con pollo*, which he'd zip up with beer and sliced chorizos, or a spicy *picadillo* with rice and *frijoles negros*, and plates stacked high with crisply fried *tostones* (green plantains) or their sweet and ripe cousins, *maduros*. On those days, when everything in the kitchen smelled so good, I sensed that my father felt bad for me. My meals of boiled carrots and mashed potatoes and spinach (no butter or salt) and a few pieces of skinless chicken breast, which my mother carefully cooked, must have seemed pitiful to him.

I can remember hearing my parents arguing at night about my illness, and my father blaming my mother for it, as well as for *los gastos*—the extra expenses of doctors' visits and medicines that had come into their lives. My father started to drink more than he should have, perhaps because he was so affected by my condition, although I have since heard another explanation: In the early nineteen-forties, his older brother Oscar rode on horseback from his farm in Jiguaní, Cuba, to the city of Santiago, to get a visa, so that he could, at my father's invitation, join him in New York. On the way home, he was caught in a storm,



Businessmen sat at the long bar, sipping Martinis. *Photograph by Ruven Afanador.*

and, when lightning struck a tree as he passed by, his horse bolted and threw him into a ditch. The fall broke my uncle's neck. After lingering for thirty days, he died—a tragedy for which my father always blamed himself.

In those years, after finishing the breakfast shift, my father reported to the Men's Bar, working in a kitchen not more than twenty paces from the liquor cabinets that had made that grillroom what the *Times* called one of the most famous watering holes for thirsty executives in the city. It was there that my father's closest friend on the job, a fellow-cook named Rubén Díaz, initiated him (or so my mother later told me) into the joys of a midafternoon shot of rye whiskey. Eventually, he would come home and, after taking a nap for an hour or so, spend most evenings in our kitchen in the company of a couple of friends—usually Mr. Martínez, a superintendent, and a sallow-faced Puerto Rican whom we knew simply as Frankie the Exterminator—eating and drinking and smoking until well past midnight. Somehow, he always managed to get up in time to go to work at five o'clock, rarely missing a day at the hotel.

His attack came in early September, after one of his Sunday dinners. The next morning, although he felt rather short of breath, he went through the usual business of getting ready for work. Being a light sleeper, I was always aware of his movements: the sound of him showering, the toilet flushing, his keys jangling as he locked the door and made his way out into the still New York dawn. Coming home that afternoon, he could barely speak and went to bed early. In the middle of the night, he asked my mother to call an ambulance, and, in a panic—she did not speak much English then—she woke my older brother, Pascualito, and sent him off with a dime to a corner telephone booth to call the hospital. I was standing in our hallway when the emergency workers arrived: as they carried my father out, he looked at me and said, with sadness and fear in his eyes, "*Pórtate bien*"—"Behave yourself."

He spent a few weeks recuperating in a sunny room with a pleasing view of Central Park, on the fourth floor of Flower Hospital, his hours alone passed listening to a transistor radio or reading the *Daily News* and *El Diario*. Neighbors from our street and friends from around the city came to visit him, leaving bouquets and cards addressed to "José Pascual Hijuelos," and sometimes simply to "Joe." On one occasion, when my brother and I went to see him, a few of his friends from the Biltmore dropped by to say hello. A black cook from Haiti, whose name I cannot recall, brought my father a rosary, which he hung on a lamp, probably as a good-luck charm, as he rarely went to church. Dressed in a dark suit, a teary-eyed Italian from the pastry shop, a fellow named Tony, assured my father that, while all was going well at the hotel, the staff missed him.

At home, my father adjusted to a new health regimen, abandoning his cigarettes and drinks and forsaking the rich foods that he so loved. The Restaurant and Bar Workers Union, Local No. 7, guaranteed his basic paycheck, which was then about sixty dollars a week before taxes and union dues were taken out, but my father had also worked other jobs to bring in extra money, and so, for a while, we had to live more frugally than before. We had a credit line with a corner grocery store, and neighbors like the García family, who lived upstairs, would come by with pots of chicken soup or *gallego* stew for us, which helped, but my father was worried about money and anxious to get back to work. I spent a lot of time with him then, taking walks over to Riverside Park, or sitting on a bench on the Columbia University campus in the afternoon. A quiet man, *un tipo muy callado*, he said little to me, but always held my hand. He began to feel better, and his friends commented on his improved condition. Yet the fact that neither he nor I could eat what we wanted seemed a sad affair to him; in that we were united.

TELESCOPE

There is a moment after you move your eye away
when you forget where you are
because you've been living, it seems,
somewhere else, in the silence of the night sky.

You've stopped being here in the world.
You're in a different place,
a place where human life has no meaning.

You're not a creature in a body.
You exist as the stars exist,
participating in their stillness, their immensity.

Then you're in the world again.
At night, on a cold hill,
taking the telescope apart.

You realize afterward
not that the image is false
but the relation is false.

You see again how far away
each thing is from every other thing.

—*Louise Glück*

I had never been to the Biltmore Hotel. I knew about it because there were always matchbooks in our apartment, their white covers illustrated with a pen-and-ink rendering of the building, and our kitchen utensils and the cutlery we ate with were embossed with a florid "BH." I had also often heard my mother complaining about *los desgraciados*—the louses—at the Biltmore who borrowed money from my father and never paid him back. But, aside from such details, I had no idea what the hotel was like.

One Friday afternoon, as soon as my father felt well enough to make the trip downtown, he decided to go to the hotel and pick up his paycheck, instead of waiting for it to arrive in the mail, and to take me along. In my prolonged convalescence, my world had been circumscribed by visits to the hospital, Sunday masses at Corpus Christi Church, and sporadic attendance at its school. My mother kept me home during even the lightest rain, and she never let me go out on the street alone, for the gutter teemed with germs—*microbios*, as she called them. And, while my walks with my father had always been pleasant, the very idea of a subway ride downtown seemed a dramatic departure from the claustrophobic repetitiveness of my days.

My father always took care in dressing for work, and on this occasion he put on a starched white shirt, a red tie, a brown jacket and overcoat, and a black-brimmed brown felt hat. Looking himself over in the speckled bathroom mirror, he turned to me and asked, "*Listo*?"—"Ready?"

We made our way on the cane-seated trains, first to Times Square and then on the shuttle to Grand Central Terminal. When we came out onto the busy intersection of Vanderbilt Avenue and Forty-third Street, I had my first view of the Biltmore: looming twenty-six stories high and with a thousand rooms, it took up the entire block. Businessmen and tourists were swarming through a back entranceway, doormen opening the bronze doors for them, as taxicabs pulled up to the curb and bellboys in beige uniforms attended to luggage. Heading along the Forty-fourth Street side of the hotel, we entered it mid-block through a loading dock, where a truck filled with crates of oranges, tomatoes, and lettuce stood idling. There, a man sat inside a booth on a platform; when my father approached him, they shook hands and exchanged greetings. "Hello, Joe, nice to see you," he said. Looking through an accordion file, he pulled out a brown envelope bearing my father's name and, as a matter of what I guess was an old habit, offered him a cigarette.

My father said, "No, thank you," tucked the envelope into his coat pocket, and turned to me, saying, "*Vamos arriba, O.K.?*" We went through a door and down a long hallway lined with garbage cans, produce crates, milk cannisters, and beer kegs to a service elevator, which we rode up to the second floor. On the way, my father proudly introduced me to the operator: "*Ramón, éste es mi niño, Oscarito.*"

After going down another long hallway, we were in the cooks' locker room, which was off a kitchen adjoining the banquet hall where my father's breakfast shift began. Being in that room, even as several men stood in the showers soaping themselves down, seemed to bring him comfort. He showed me his brown metal locker, in a row of a dozen others. Inside, his white apron, trousers, and tunic hung on hooks; two slightly stained chef's toques were folded neatly on a shelf; and a pair of thick-soled black shoes, size 11, as I remember, rested at the bottom—along with a bottle of rye whiskey. A tin box, bursting open with union pamphlets, vacation brochures, and letters, sat on a second shelf, along with a few girlie magazines (*Knight* and *Pimienta!*), which my father quickly turned face down. Then we went into the kitchen, where his colleagues were in the middle of preparing a luncheon. Despite the commotion, every waiter, busboy, and cook came over to greet us, my father embracing one after another, and introducing me again and again as his son, a declaration that thrilled me.

Then he took me down into the cavernous marble lobby: there were brass bas-reliefs on the walls, plush carpeting underfoot, and a ceiling painted with allegorical scenes of gods flying through the heavens. With bellhops and doormen hurrying about, droves of businessmen and conventioneers gathering for meetings, and college boys on the prowl for coeds flocking into the shops, restaurants, and bars, or sitting on banquettes under the Biltmore clock or in the Palm Court restaurant, I was amazed not only by the activity of the place but by the fact that so many people seemed to be eating whatever they wanted. Waiters carried trays of grilled-steak platters, steamed lobsters, succulent roast chickens, racks of lamb, filets mignons in brandy sauce, veal milanese and cutlets parmesan, each dish accompanied by a portion of roasted rosemary potatoes, mounds of rice pilaf, or spaghetti with tomato sauce; young couples huddled over glass chalices of hot-fudge sundaes or slices of chocolate layer cake; forks and spoons clicked against plates, wine corks popped. "You must be hungry," my father said. "*Quieres comer*?"—"Do you want to eat?" When I told him I did, he led me into his inner sanctum, the Men's Bar, which was just off the lobby, on the Forty-third Street side of the hotel.

The Men's Bar, or Men's Grillroom, as it had also been called, was a somewhat dark and intimate, Edwardian-style, wood-panelled, "stag only" establishment, whose walls were decorated with pictures of sporting scenes and scantily clad ladies. A sign saying "No Women Allowed" hung by the entrance. Businessmen were sitting at the long oval bar, sipping Martinis and smoking, or seated at booths, having lunch. The bartender, a Cuban named Rafael, was happy to see my father, and soon the other workers were greeting him with the same affection he had been met with upstairs. One of them, a burly German waiter, was moved to tears at the sight of him.

The kitchen itself, at the rear of the bar, beyond a pair of double metal doors, was a world of stainless-steel counters, sinks, ovens, and grills. Fans were blowing, steam rose from pots of boiling water, deep fryers were crackling with hot oil. In a corner, my father's friend Díaz, with a Cesar Romero mustache and a cigarette in his mouth, stood cooking hamburgers and strips of bacon on a grill. "*Oye, hombre!*" Díaz called out, and they hugged as if they had not seen each other in a hundred years. Another cook, in a billowy toque, tending to a pot of pasta sauce over a stove, wiped his hands on his apron. He must have been a Spaniard, for he addressed my father with the formal "Don Pascual," but they were soon clapping each other on the back. Even the manager, Mr. Kane, a harried-seeming, bulbous-nosed man, came out of his office to greet us. My father's ears, which were large and fleshy, brimmed bright red.

"How are you feeling?" Mr. Kane asked him.

"Much better, sir."

"Good. Then come back to work soon."

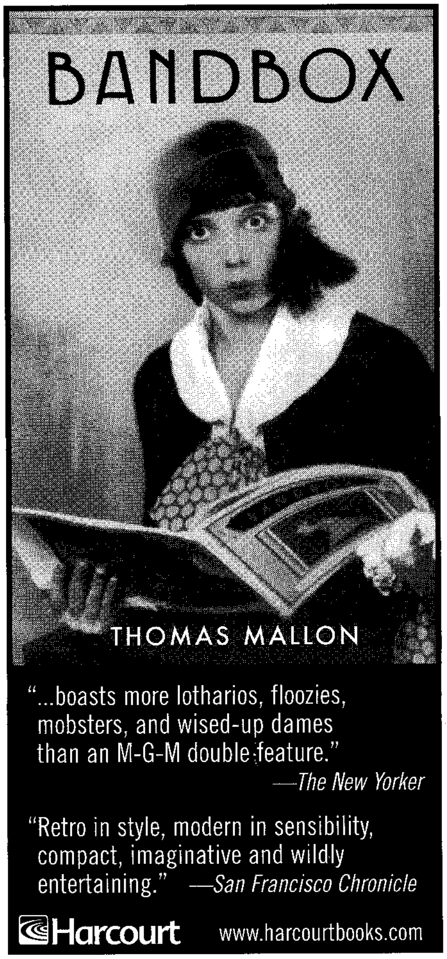
Finally, my father sat me down at a table in the back, where the cooks and waiters ate their meals. I was expecting nothing more than the usual baked potato and a piece of chicken, but, instead, my father asked me, "Now, *what* would you like to eat?" I didn't know what to say—I didn't even know when I had last been asked that question. He repeated it: "*Dime, hijo. Qué quieres comer*?" But by then it was clear that he had come to his own decision. He called out to Díaz, "Rubén, how about making one of your finest hamburgers for my boy." "*Como no, capitán,*" Díaz answered. I watched as he put a handful of filets mignons through a meat grinder, formed the glistening red strands into a patty with seasoned bread crumbs, lightly glazed onions, and salt and pepper, and put it to sizzle on the grill. My father, meanwhile, had cut up some Idaho potatoes, which he cooked with onions, butter, and oil in a skillet until they were crisp. "Smells good, huh?" he asked. Soon, those wondrous and forbidden delicacies, garnished with a sprig of parsley, appeared on a platter before me, along with a bottle of ketchup and a Coca-Cola. I remember that my father smiled, watching me as I happily ate; in that moment, all thoughts of illness and mortality seemed to have passed from his mind forever.

"*Es un secreto, entre nosotros*"—"It is our little secret," he said to me. "Say nothing of this to your mother." ♦

OOPS! DEPARTMENT

From the Ithaca (N.Y.) Journal.

Prentice Smith and Kenna Lindsey, Newfield, a daughter, Fatima Rene, March 26, 2003. (Rene has an accent mark, but I don't know how to process one with this program. David Durrett)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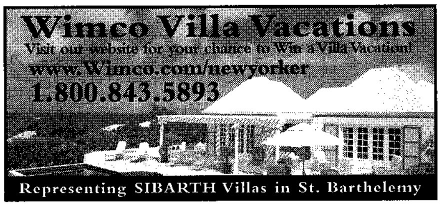
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ANNALS OF LAW

KILLER INSTINCTS

Did a famous prosecutor put the wrong man on death row?

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

Many American courthouses have a Kenneth Peasley. For years, he was the most feared prosecutor in Arizona's Pima County, which includes Tucson. He was widely known as the government lawyer who wouldn't plea-bargain, who left his adversaries seething, and who almost always won. When defense lawyers got together, they would talk about how Peasley had stuck his finger in their clients' faces, or how he wouldn't greet them in the hallway. "The defense lawyers hated him," Howard Hantman, a Pima County Superior Court judge, said. "But I always thought that was because he was so good. Watching Ken was like watching great theatre. He had an instinct for the jugular like no prosecutor I ever saw."

Peasley was more than just a local phenomenon. From 1978 until last year, he tried more than two hundred felony cases, including a hundred and forty homicides, and handled about sixty capital cases. He gave lectures around the country about how to try murder cases, and he won national awards. Steve Neely, who, as the county attorney, was Peasley's boss for eighteen years, said, "He was absolutely the most effective prosecutorial performer that I have ever seen or heard of." Peasley, a two-time state prosecutor of the year, is personally responsible for a tenth of the prisoners on Arizona's death row.

Last year, Peasley acquired another distinction: he was disbarred for intentionally presenting false evidence in death-penalty cases—something that had never before happened to an American prosecutor. In a 1992 triple-murder case, Peasley introduced testimony that he knew to be false; three men were convicted and sentenced to die. Peasley was convinced that the three were guilty, but he also believed that the evidence needed a push.

During the years of Peasley's rise and fall, the exoneration of prisoners on America's death rows has become increasingly common. According to the Death Penalty Information Center, since the mid-nineteen-seventies a hundred and seventeen death-row inmates have been released. Defense lawyers, often relying on DNA testing, have shown repeatedly how shoddy crime-lab work, lying informants, and mistaken eyewitness identifications, among other factors, led to unjust convictions. But DNA tests don't reveal how innocent people come to be prosecuted in the first place. The career of Kenneth Peasley does.

Although new evidence suggests that the co-defendants may have had nothing to do with the crime for which they were convicted, Peasley still believes that he prosecuted the right men. "I have never seen a case where I believed the prosecutors set out to prosecute someone whom they believed to be innocent," says Rob Warden, the director of the Center on Wrongful Convictions at the Northwestern University School of Law, whose staff members were involved in eleven of the eighteen recent exonerations on Illinois's death row. "They just get wedded to a theory and then ignore the evidence that doesn't fit." According to Barry Scheck, who co-founded the Innocence Project, which has won exonerations for more than a hundred and fifty convicted defendants, "After a while, some veteran prosecutors think that they can just trust their gut. Once you get to the point where you believe your instincts must be right, you quickly get to the point where you just deep-six inconvenient evidence."

One of the men Peasley prosecuted in the 1992 case is still on Arizona's death row. Unless a court intervenes, that man, Martin Soto-Fong, who was a seventeen-year-old high-school dropout at the time of the murders, will be executed, although no date has been set. The case already ranks as an extreme example of prosecutorial misconduct, but if Martin Soto-Fong is killed for a crime he didn't commit, it will stand for something far worse.

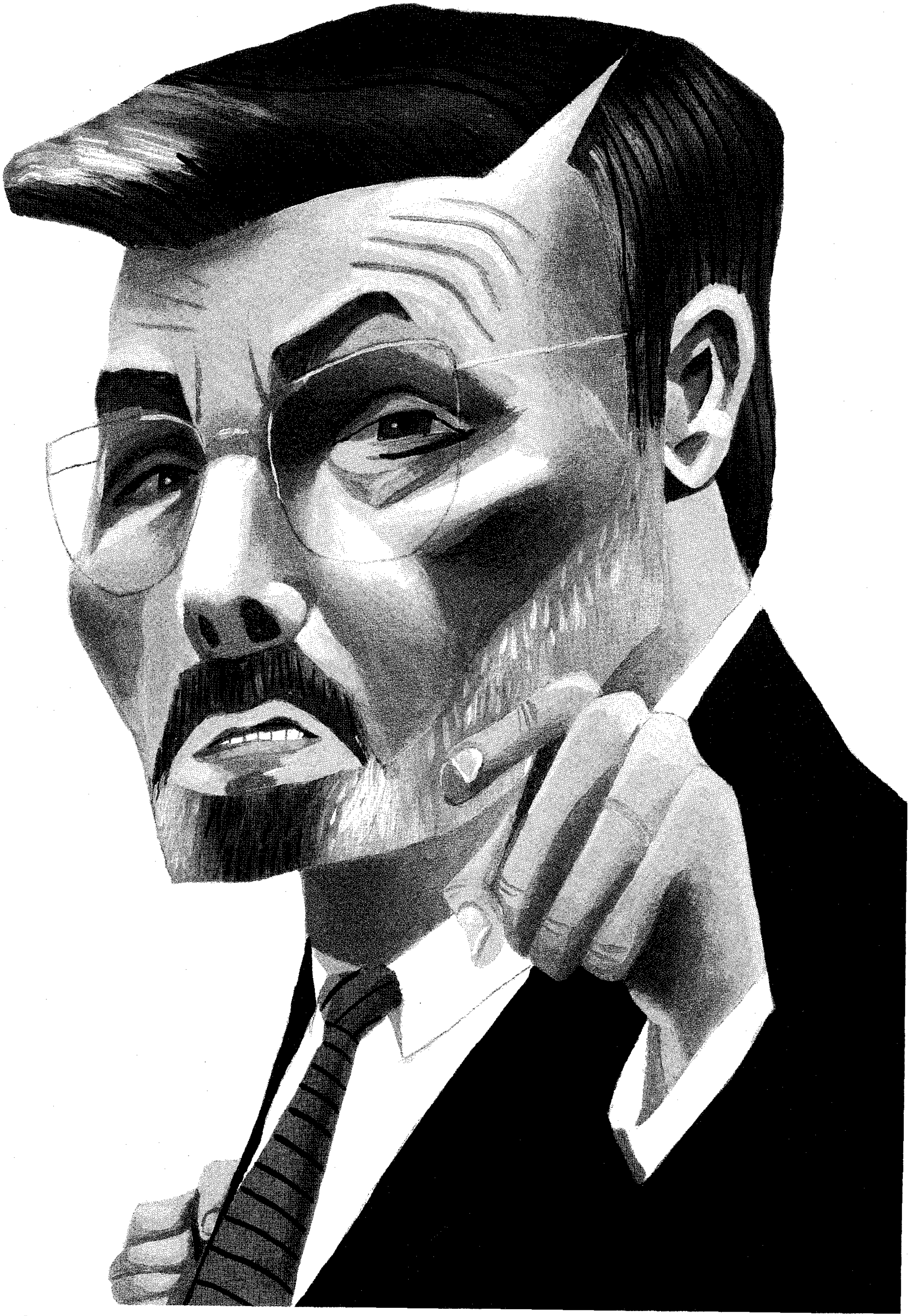
Shortly after ten o'clock on the night of June 24, 1992, in Tucson, an anonymous caller dialled 911 and said, "Yeah, I just walked into the El Grande. It's on Thirty-sixth, and, uh, there are two, uh, guys that work. . . . They laying down on the floor, and one's laying in a pool of blood, and there's no one in the store."

The operator apparently recognized the reference to the El Grande Market; the battered, one-story painted-brick store was a landmark of sorts on the desolate streets of South Tucson—a desert ghetto of vacant lots, trailer parks, and auto-repair shops. When the police arrived at the scene, they found that the caller had understated things. There were three, not two, people on the floor, two dead and one dying from gunshot wounds. They were Fred Gee, forty-five years old, the store manager; Zewan Huang, seventy-five, Gee's uncle, who also worked there; and Raymond Arriola, thirty-one, who had started at the market as a clerk the previous month. Peasley soon arrived on the scene, as did Joseph Godoy, a detective with the Tucson Police Department.

This was familiar duty for Peasley. Shortly after he joined the Pima County prosecutor's office, in 1978, he agreed to be the first lawyer called to most murder scenes, and he held on to that demanding assignment, often working with Godoy, for almost two decades. For several months after the murders in the El Grande Market, there were no viable suspects, and pressure built in the local press for a break in the case. One headline in the Arizona *Daily Star* read, "TRIPLE MURDER HAS POLICE PUZZLED."

With a population of about half a million people, Tucson is one-third the size of Phoenix. The contrast between the two cities extends to politics

MARK ULRIKSEN



Kenneth Peasley was known as a lawyer who wouldn't plea-bargain, left his adversaries seething, and almost always won.

and is exemplified by the difference between their two most famous sons, Morris Udall and Barry Goldwater. "Tucson is as far away from Phoenix as San Francisco is from Los Angeles," Bruce Babbitt, a former governor of the state, told me. "Phoenix was built on the pursuit of monetary gain, and Tucson was built around the university, which has given a kind of intellectual and idealistic strand to its politics." Tucson, however, never turned into a desert version of Berkeley or Cambridge. "There's always been a dark side to Tucson, too," Babbitt said. "The mob was a significant presence for years, with the Bonnano family living there. The drug trade, with the proximity to the Mexican border, has always been a problem."

Government, including law enforcement, dominates Tucson in the way that business, notably real-estate development, controls Phoenix. Dingy municipal buildings, not gleaming office towers, predominate in downtown Tucson. A couple of forlorn palm trees, and a cactus here and there, offer the only reminders of its desert setting. The county attorney's office long ago outgrew its quarters in the courthouse and now occupies nine floors in a dreary building a few blocks away. There, from a corner office on the tenth floor, Ken Peasley could watch storms roll in over the Santa Catalina Mountains.

Peasley would sometimes arrive at his desk before dawn to prepare for trials, which he often scheduled back to back. His appetite for trial work was matched by a compulsive streak outside the courtroom. He arranged the papers on his desk in rigidly precise piles. He chain-smoked. He drank a case of Pepsi a day. (Later, he lost thirty pounds just by switching to diet soda.) "For me, it wasn't a job," Peasley told me. "It was who I was and what I did."

Peasley was early for our first meeting, which was at my hotel's restaurant. He doesn't look like someone who could dominate a courtroom. He's on the short side, more shrunken than fit at fifty-seven, with thinning gray hair and a wispy beard, and he dresses in the civil-service uniform of white shirt, striped tie, and oversized aviator glasses. His voice, though, is a low growl that demands attention, and he talks in emphatic declarative sentences, like a man unaccustomed to interruption. The ordeal of his disbarment may have taught him a little humility, but just a little. He's more angry than sorry.

MD-HDTV
What's that thing on Morley Safer's neck?
He should get that looked at.
I'm pretty sure it's nothing.
R. Chr

Peasley's father, a sign painter, and his mother, a legal secretary, moved from Michigan to Mississippi to Texas; they settled in Tucson when Ken was in junior high school. He attended the University of Arizona for college and law school, and served as an intern in the public defender's office. Stanton Bloom, who is still a prominent defense lawyer in Tucson, recalled, "I was supervising Ken, and we were raising an insanity defense in a case where my guy blew someone's head off with a shotgun. And we interviewed a witness who said my client was acting 'like the wild man of Borneo.' Later, I needed Ken to testify about that conversation, and he said he didn't remember and didn't have it in his notes. I could tell Ken just didn't like defending people. I told him he ought to get a job as a prosecutor, and he did."

As a deputy county attorney, Peasley thrived, finding satisfactions that had eluded him in his personal life. An early marriage ended in divorce, and Peasley does not see the two children from that union. His second wife, Elizabeth Peasley-Fimbres, was also a prosecutor, but that marriage ended after Peasley had an office romance with a college-student intern. (Peasley-Fimbres is now a juvenile-court judge in Tucson.) A third marriage also failed. Peasley and his fourth wife, a nurse, have been married for twenty years, and have teenage twin boys. "What he did for his job was his first love—more than women, more than his children," Lea Petersen, the former intern, told me. "It was his identity."

Peasley never tried to make friends in the courtroom. "I didn't believe in playing grab-ass or glad-handing during trial," he said. "If I went to trial on somebody, frankly, I was convinced that they had done something really bad and I didn't think that it was funny. So during the trials, no, I didn't kid around a lot. There was nothing to kid around about, from my point of view." Defense lawyers regularly asked judges to make Peasley stop glaring at their clients. "I was something of an asshole," Peasley said.

The burden of the El Grande investigation fell to Peasley and Joe Godoy. Peasley and Godoy made an odd pair. Godoy is genial and outgoing, where Peasley is taciturn and severe. Godoy is thickly built, with a big thatch of black hair and a drooping mustache that curls down to his chin. When he talked about the El Grande murders, the case that led to his departure from the force, he never appeared defensive or unsure. "Joe is just totally likable, and juries loved him," Judge Hantman said. "He was very soft-spoken, very credible, very sympathetic." First thrown together at crime scenes, Peasley and Godoy started working cases as a team, and then became friends.

The courthouse crowd in Tucson flees from downtown at every chance, and at lunchtime judges, cops, and politicians line up for Mexican food at Rigo's, in South Tucson, about fifteen minutes away. Godoy doesn't so much patronize Rigo's as preside there, in both English and Spanish. "I tried to think about El Grande the way a bad guy would," he explained, as we sat in a booth at Rigo's. "You had all these people killed, so maybe it was a stranger or maybe it was someone who knew them. So I decided to find all the people who had worked at the El Grande. It took weeks, but I found everyone except this one guy, this guy named Martin. I knew he was just a kid, and I kept just missing him. He was moving apartments, staying in different places. At first, I thought it was two different people, one named Soto and the other named Fong. Then I realized it was only one guy, Martin Soto-Fong, and he had never been prosecuted, never even photographed or fingerprinted. I was looking for him, but I was always one step behind him. I needed to make him or clear him."

The situation became even more pressing for Godoy and Peasley when a similar crime took place on August 26th: in the course of a robbery, masked gunmen shot the owner of Mariano's Pizza, though he survived. "Mariano's Pizza was something similar to El Grande because they shot someone when they didn't have to," Godoy said. "I learned from these other detectives that they were going to arrest these two guys, Chris McCrimmon and Andre Minnitt, and I wanted to be part of the arrest teams. I said, 'After you're finished with them about the robberies, I want to talk to them about the homicides at the El Grande.'" McCrimmon and Minnitt, both in their early twenties, were arrested, with Godoy's help, on September 2, 1992.

By that point, Godoy and Peasley regarded Soto-Fong, McCrimmon, and Minnitt as suspects in the El Grande murders, although there was little evidence against them. Then they discovered Keith Woods, who became the key witness in the case.

Woods, who was friends with Christopher McCrimmon, had been in prison on a drug charge. Although Woods was only twenty-one years old, he was already a three-time felon. When he was released, on August 21, 1992, McCrimmon picked him up to drive him home. A few days later, Woods was arrested for possessing cocaine, a parole violation that subjected him to a sentence of twenty-five years to life. Faced with this prospect, Woods told the detective who arrested him that he knew something about several recent crimes in Tucson, and detectives eventually steered him to Joe Godoy.

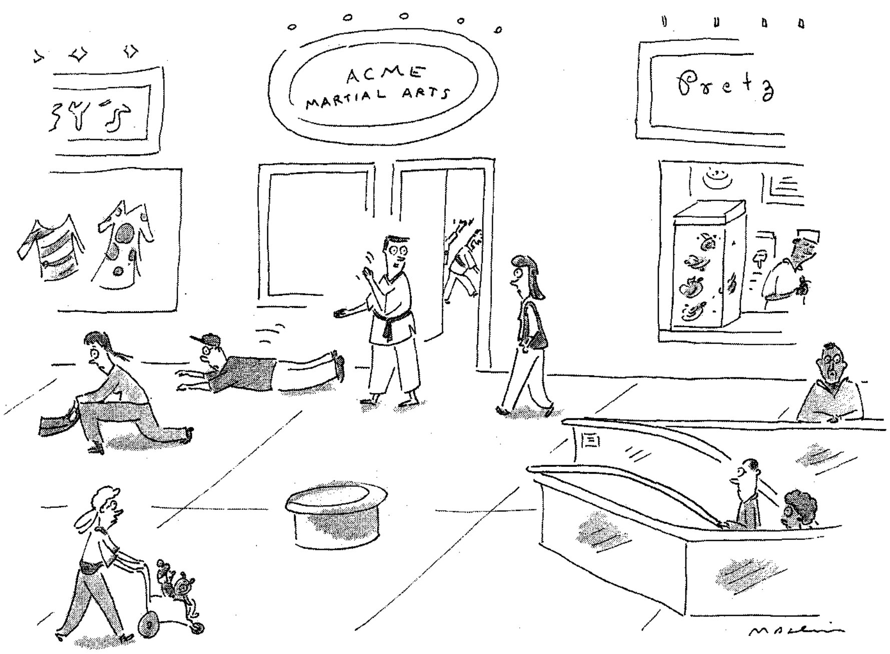
On September 8, 1992, Godoy sat down with Woods at Tucson police headquarters for an interview, which was tape-recorded. According to the transcript, Woods said that after McCrimmon picked him up from prison they met with their mutual friend Minnitt, and the two men revealed that they, along with a third man, committed the El Grande murders. In that interview, Woods said he knew the third person only as "Cha-chi," but he later said that it was Martin Soto-Fong. Woods also said that McCrimmon and Minnitt played a role in the Mariano's Pizza case. Peasley and Godoy decided not to pursue the parole-violation charges against Woods.

The use of criminal informants poses difficulties for prosecutors, because such witnesses can be extremely manipulative. Some informants lie, telling prosecutors what they want to hear, because they think they can get themselves a better deal. "You have to be tremendously careful that you don't give them ideas," says Stephen Trott, a federal appeals-court judge and former prosecutor, who lectures widely on the ethics of using informants. "They know that the best way to stay out of jail is not to hire Johnnie Cochran but, rather, to turn on someone else. At a moment's notice, they will make stuff up and give it to you. With an interested witness, you do not lay information on the table and let him snatch it and say he knew it already."

As far as Peasley was concerned, Woods solved two high-profile crimes: the El Grande murders and the Mariano's Pizza shooting. Peasley told me that he understood the risks of dealing with Woods. "He had priors. He was a drug user at the time. He had one of just about everything a witness could be impeached with," he said. "So he wouldn't have been my first choice. But he was who I had. And I was satisfied from the information he was giving that it was accurate."

Armed with Woods as a witness, Peasley brought charges against McCrimmon, Minnitt, and Soto-Fong. The first El Grande trial, in 1993, was against Soto-Fong, who had worked at the store a few months before the murders. After the tip from Woods, Tucson police investigators determined that Soto-Fong's prints matched those that had been found on plastic bags and a food stamp found at the scene. In light of this, Peasley said, "probably a third-year law student could have convicted Fong." The court appointed James Stuehringer, a respected Tucson lawyer and a friend of Peasley's, to defend Soto-Fong.

During the Soto-Fong trial, Stuehringer criticized the way Godoy had handled the evidence, especially the items with the fingerprints. Peasley defended Godoy with characteristic zeal, and, in the end, won a conviction and a death sentence against Soto-Fong. The trial deepened the bond between Peasley and Godoy. "I thought that Ken did a really good job putting everything back together and saying I'm not a bad cop," Godoy told me. Godoy was so moved by Peasley's defense of him that when he



"Free sample?"

married for the third time he asked Peasley to perform the civil ceremony. (Tucson law enforcement is a small world, and Godoy's wife is also a Pima County prosecutor.)

In 1993, Peasley also won convictions in joint trials against McCrimmon and Minnitt—first in the Mariano's Pizza case and then in the El Grande murders, with Keith Woods as the key witness. Apart from Woods's testimony, there wasn't much evidence against McCrimmon and Minnitt in the El Grande case. Eyewitnesses described a gold Cadillac as the getaway car, and McCrimmon's fingerprints were found on a car that was parked a few blocks away from the El Grande; but that car was neither gold nor a Cadillac.

It was in these trials, in 1993, that Peasley started bending the truth about the evidence. He knew that a jury would have suspicions about a dubious character like Keith Woods, so he tried to enhance Woods's credibility, urging jurors to believe Woods because what he'd told Godoy was "something that Woods could get only from those people who were directly involved in causing the deaths" of the three victims. Peasley said that investigators knew nothing about the three defendants until Woods volunteered the information during his interview, on September 8, 1992. McCrimmon and Minnitt were sentenced to thirty-six years in the Mariano's Pizza case and to death in the El Grande murders. With the convictions of the three men now complete, the case vanished from the front pages of the Tucson papers and the defendants began their wait on death row.

Only a moment's hesitation by a single juror kept the case alive. Immediately after the verdicts were announced in the 1993 murder trial of McCrimmon and Minnitt, the judge did the customary polling of the jury. In answering whether he agreed with the verdict, one juror wavered, saying, "God, I can't say 'yes' and I can't say 'no.' " After further questioning by the judge, the juror went along with the verdict, but three years later, in 1996, the Arizona Supreme Court ruled that the juror had been coerced, and ordered a new trial for the two defendants. (The appeals court, however, separately upheld Soto-Fong's conviction and death sentence.) For their second trial, which did not take place until 1997, McCrimmon and Minnitt were assigned new lawyers. McCrimmon drew Richard Lougee.

Rick Lougee and Ken Peasley could pass for fraternal twins. Both men are fifty-seven, of medium height and weight, with gray hair and a gray beard. Peasley has a slicked-back pompadour, Lougee the tousled look of an aging hippie. Though made from similar raw material, the two men come out of different worlds. Like Peasley, Lougee took a circuitous route to Tucson. He was born into a middle-class family in Connecticut, educated at Franklin and Marshall College, and started law school at Duke in 1969. At that point, he was drafted into the Army, where he served as a stateside chaplain's assistant; after he was discharged, in 1971, he went to Tucson to study Romantic poetry at the University of Arizona. But he didn't have the patience for academic life, so he returned to law school, graduated in 1977, and began a career as a defense attorney. He lived in Connecticut, New Mexico, and Key West until he remembered how much he had liked Tucson as a graduate student and returned there, with his second wife, in 1988. He spent six years with the public defender's office and opened a private practice with a friend the following year. "Because we were just starting out and didn't have any clients of our own, we applied to the county for what were called 'contract' murder cases," Lougee told me. "The first one I got was Chris McCrimmon."

Lougee and I were talking in the small adobe house, across the street from the university, where he lives with his wife, who works for him as a paralegal, and their twelve-year-old son. By the late nineties, Lougee had been a defense lawyer for more than two decades, and he had few illusions about the system, or about his own clients. "I normally don't ask my clients whether they're guilty," he told me. "Personally, I don't care. But the first thing Chris said to me was 'Dawg, I didn't do it.' Frankly, it didn't make much of an impression. I've tried hundreds of cases. I've heard it all from clients before."

Late one night, shortly before McCrimmon's retrial in 1997, Lougee started reading the transcript of Woods's first tape-recorded interview with the police, the one on September 8, 1992. Lougee noticed that, during the course of that long, rambling conversation, Woods made a brief reference to an earlier discussion with Godoy. "I said to myself, 'Holy shit, Joe had talked to him before,' " Lougee said. "I see how Peasley has been finessing this issue. He's been arguing to the juries that Woods must be telling the truth because there is no other way that Woods could have known this information. Now I see that's not true. It becomes clear to me that Woods didn't come up with those names—Godoy did."

At the last minute, in 1997, the judge severed McCrimmon and Minnitt's joint trial into separate cases. Minnitt went first, and Lougee walked into the courtroom to listen to some of the testimony, because the same witnesses would also be testifying in the McCrimmon retrial. Peasley asked Godoy about his initial interview with Woods: "When you first sat down and talked with Mr. Woods on September 8 of 1992 . . . had you come up with the name Chris McCrimmon?"

"No, sir," Godoy said.

"Had you come up with the name Andre Minnitt?"

"No, sir."

Godoy further testified that he had never heard of Martin Soto-Fong before the September 8th interview.

Peasley drove the point home: "The first time you heard any of those three names would have been in the conversation with Keith Woods on September 8, 1992?"

"Yes," Godoy replied.

"I knew that Godoy had committed perjury in that trial," Lougee said.

Minnitt's second trial ended in a hung jury, and he remained incarcerated on his conviction in the Mariano's Pizza case. McCrimmon's retrial—Lougee's case—began within a few days of Minnitt's. When Lougee prepared, in August of 1997, he made a chart laying out evidence that Godoy had lied in the previous trial. During the retrial, faced with proof that he had elicited false testimony from Godoy, Peasley responded by attacking Lougee for raising the issue.

"Peasley was leaning on the counsel table, hissing at me. His saliva was on me," Lougee recalled. "His finger was six inches away from my face." Repeatedly, in a series of heated conferences with the judge, Peasley expressed shock that Lougee could question his integrity, and dared the defense lawyer to lodge a formal complaint against him.

"He is accusing me of suborning perjury, and if he is going to make those accusations," Peasley said to the judge outside the hearing of the jury, "he should have filed a—"

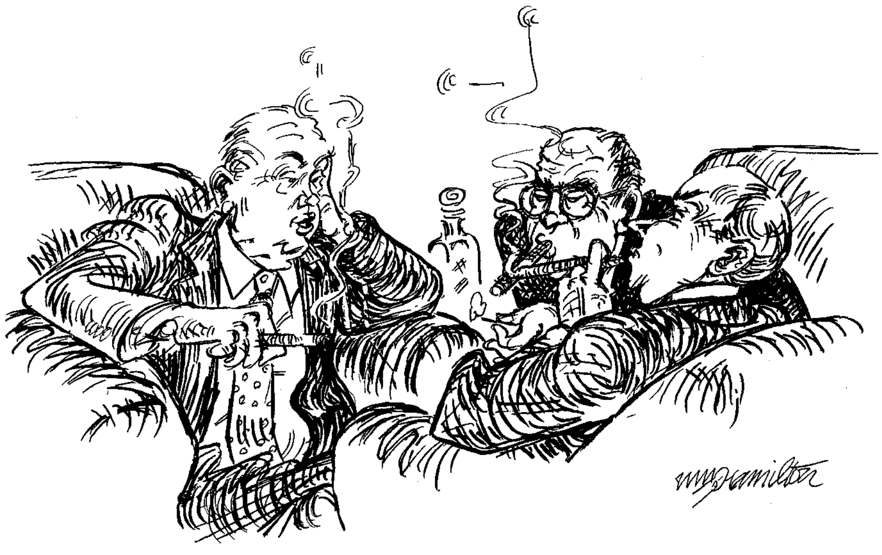
"Hold it," the judge interjected.

Peasley later challenged Lougee directly in the courtroom: "If Mr. Lougee thought this was perjury, he should have filed a complaint. He hasn't done that."

Nevertheless, Lougee proceeded to demonstrate to the jury that, in fact, Keith Woods had not spontaneously volunteered the names of the suspects in the El Grande case. After just forty-two minutes of deliberation, the jury acquitted McCrimmon of the murders. "When the jury came back, Chris picks me up in his arms and says, 'See, dawg, I told you! I told you!' " Lougee recalled. Later that day, Lougee began drafting his complaint about Peasley to the Arizona state bar. "I didn't celebrate," he told me. "I went and filed a bar complaint"—on September 5, 1997. Lougee added, "It has cost me dearly."

But Peasley remained a power in the county attorney's office. In April of 1998, Barbara LaWall, who succeeded Steve Neely as county attorney, appointed Peasley as head of the criminal division, making him the top prosecutor in her office. (In April of 1999, Minnitt went on trial for a third time for the El Grande Market murders, without Peasley as the prosecutor, and was again convicted and sentenced to death.) Even with his new administrative duties, Peasley continued trying and winning cases, and in 1999 he received a national honor—the Association of Government Attorneys in Capital Litigation's Trial Advocacy Award. Lougee, on the other hand, found that his professional life was getting harder. "From the day I brought the complaint, I basically stopped getting plea offers for my clients from that office," Lougee said. (Pima County officials deny that they retaliated against Lougee's clients. "I think Rick Lougee suffers from considerable paranoia from time to time," LaWall told me.) Judges, prosecutors, and even defense lawyers rallied to testify for Peasley. Lougee had few supporters; among them was Richard Parrish, a Tucson lawyer and friend, who says, "This guy discovered extreme wrongdoing in a capital case by the most respected prosecutor in Tucson and brought it before judges and before the bar, and was excoriated at every instance for doing such a thing to such a great man."

Still, the bar complaint did move forward, and Peasley had to get a lawyer: he chose his old friend James Stuehringer, who had unsuccessfully represented Martin Soto-Fong in the first El Grande trial, in 1993, and who had his own reasons to be grateful to Peasley. In early 1998, Stuehringer's son Craig was arrested in Cincinnati for possessing a hidden gun while dealing drugs, a crime that carried a mandatory three-year prison term, and Peasley intervened on the young man's behalf. Peasley urged the Ohio judge to allow Craig to do community service rather than serve a prison sentence. (In



"I actually prefer same sex—as long as it doesn't involve sex."

the end, the judge reduced the charges so that Craig Stuehringer could receive a sentence of probation.)

James Stuehringer, a gregarious Midwesterner with a head full of carefully barbered salt-and-pepper hair, practices civil and criminal law at one of the larger firms in Tucson. The obvious question is whether Stuehringer had a conflict of interest. How could he defend the prosecutor against charges of misconduct in the very case that had put one of his clients on death row?

"I was done representing Fong," Stuehringer told me over lunch at Rigo's. "I had taken his case all the way to the United States Supreme Court, which declined to take his case. I had written him a letter saying, 'I worked my ass off for you, and I wish you well,' " Stuehringer said. "The accusations against Ken just had to do with McCrimmon and Minnitt. So was there a conflict in representing Peasley? I sat down with my partners to talk about it, and they said, 'There's no conflict, but be prepared for some shit.' "

Karen Clark, the lawyer who conducted the bar association's investigation of Peasley, tried repeatedly to get Stuehringer thrown off the case but failed. Lougee saw Stuehringer's role as symptomatic of the cozy nature of law practice in a small city like Tucson, not to mention a betrayal of a client who faced execution. "You don't take on the representation of the guy who is charged with misconduct in a case when you were the attorney for the other side unless you are basically saying, 'No harm, no foul,' " Lougee said. "By representing Peasley, Stuehringer was basically admitting that Soto-Fong was guilty. It's appalling."

Godoy and Peasley, not surprisingly, felt wronged by the investigation. "I was just really upset that I had to go through all this," Godoy said. "I was upset with the system, how far they had gone, and the lack of support from my own command staff." Because of Peasley's and Godoy's prominence in Tucson, a prosecutor from outside Pima County investigated the two men for obstruction of justice, and ultimately obtained an indictment of Godoy for perjury. The indictment meant that Godoy had to retire from the police force, though because he had twenty years' tenure he received a full pension. Godoy's lawyer, Michael Piccarreta, told him that prosecutors had offered him a plea. "They said, 'We'll give you a deal'—guaranteed probation if I turn on Ken and say that he was obstructing justice," Godoy recalled. "Now, I don't cuss that much and it takes me a while to get upset, but I told Mike, 'Fuck no.' I didn't want to lie to get an indictment on Ken." The criminal case against Godoy was finally assigned to a Pima County judge, Lina Rodriguez, who promptly dismissed the indictment on the unusual ground of an "overzealous" presentation to the grand jury. (The same judge later wrote a letter to the bar association as a character witness on Peasley's behalf.) In all, Godoy felt only modestly repentant about the experience: "Did I make a mistake or mistakes? Sure, I did. I'm not going to say I didn't, 'cause it's pretty obvious I did. Were they intentional? Did I need to do it to get somebody in prison? Of course not."

For a long time, Peasley's case stayed within the Tucson legal community. After more than a year of intermittent hearings, the bar association offered to drop the matter if Peasley would accept censure—a punishment well short of disbarment. Peasley turned it down.

He miscalculated. By rejecting the censure, he let the process continue, and as lawyers outside Tucson began to see the facts of his case the potential consequences grew. "In hindsight, of course, you're going to second-guess yourself for not taking the censure," Peasley told me. "I didn't do anything 'intentionally' or 'knowingly' wrong. I was not willing to take a censure for something I didn't think I did."

But, as the case moved forward, Peasley's defense evolved from a complete denial of wrongdoing to something more nuanced. First, he pointed out that the case against him had been built using documents that he himself had turned over to the defense in the El Grande cases. Eventually, Peasley's defense turned into a request for pity—something he rarely dispensed as a prosecutor. During the Minnitt trial in 1997, Stuehringer wrote in a brief, Peasley had "vision problems, periodic vertigo, mini-strokes, difficulties in focusing and concentration," so his "physical problems and workload were affecting his ability to function as a lawyer in the courtroom." But his health problems in 1997 didn't explain why he had put forward the false evidence in 1993. Today, Peasley doesn't exactly defend his conduct, though he insists that any mistakes he made were unintentional. "I'm the one who screwed up," he told me. "I gave them the opportunity to claim what they claimed and to say what they've said. And I don't miss that. And I'm responsible for that."

In 2002, the Arizona Supreme Court overturned Minnitt's conviction and death sentence and ruled that double jeopardy barred another trial, which would have been his fourth. "The record is replete with evidence of Peasley's full awareness that [Godoy's] testimony was utterly false," the justices wrote. "Peasley's misdeeds were not isolated events but became a consistent pattern of prosecutorial misconduct that began in 1993 and continued through retrial in 1997." Like McCrimmon, Minnitt was now left to serve out the remainder of his thirty-six-year sentence for the Mariano's Pizza shooting.

Finally, on May 28, 2004, the court, following up on its criticism of Peasley in the Minnitt opinion, ordered him disbarred, noting that his behavior "could not have been more harmful to the justice system." On behalf of a unanimous court, Justice Michael D. Ryan wrote, "A prosecutor who deliberately presents false testimony, especially in a capital case, has caused incalculable injury to the integrity of the legal profession and the justice system."

Even with Peasley's disbarment, the story of the El Grande murders was not over. Just a few weeks before that decision, the Arizona court had issued another unanimous order: a warrant of execution for Martin Soto-Fong. The defendant, the court wrote, "shall be executed by administering to MARTIN RAUL SOTO-FONG an intravenous injection of a substance or substances in a lethal quantity sufficient to cause death, except that MARTIN RAUL SOTO-FONG shall have the choice of either lethal injection or lethal gas."

The Arizona state-prison complex, in Florence, sits on a barren stretch of desert about fifty miles off the main highway between Phoenix and Tucson. Inside the old prison yard is a small, one-story blue stucco structure that is identified on the outside as "Housing Unit 9."

"He built his own airplane from a kit."

It's better known as the death house. The arrangement inside the building reflects the choice now available to Martin Soto-Fong. A carpeted room for spectators has one window facing the gas chamber and another facing the room holding the gurney used for administering lethal injections. (The only sign inside the building is an Air Quality Control Permit, issued by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality to "the Florence Prison Gas Chamber.") Meg Savage, a genial middle-aged woman who is a warden at one of the units in Florence, took me behind the window to the gas chamber itself, where the swinging metal door was open. "You can sit in it if you like," she said.

Death row in Arizona has a dramatic history. In 1982, a condemned prisoner known as "Banzai Bob" Vickers killed another death-row inmate by setting him on fire; he soaked toilet paper with Vitalis, set it aflame, and threw it between the bars of the man's cell. (Vickers was executed in 1999.) In 1997, another condemned prisoner, Floyd Thornton, was weeding the prison vegetable garden when his wife drove up to the fence and tried to help him escape. She started shooting an AK-47 assault rifle and a .41-calibre revolver, but both Thornton and his wife were killed after guards returned the fire. These incidents, coupled with the general trend toward ever-greater prison security, have led Arizona to establish one of the most restrictive death rows in the country.

The condemned are now housed in a new prison building, known as Special Management Unit II, about two miles from the death house. They stay in their eight-by-twelve-foot cells all day, every day. They may take three showers a week and have up to ninety minutes of recreation, also three times a week. They may not take prison jobs. The recreation facility is a cement-walled twenty-three-by-eleven-foot pen with a rubber ball and a surveillance camera. For days at a time, many death-row inmates may not see another human being. "We are right up there with any super-max in the country," Meg Savage says.

Martin (pronounced Mar-TEEN) Soto-Fong is now thirty and has been on death row for eleven years. He's about five feet six, with a slight build. His ancestry is Chinese and Mexican; he's starting to lose the straight black hair that he had when he was arrested. His voice is soft, and his English has improved during his years in prison. "He's one of the quieter guys we have on death row," Lieutenant Glenn Pacheco, a corrections officer who helps to supervise death row, said. "We never get any trouble from him." Soto-Fong was eight when his family moved from Mexico to Tucson, where his father supported the family as a construction worker. Five years ago, Soto-Fong's mother, who was of Chinese descent, committed suicide, which he attributes to her sorrow over his situation. "I can see her depression, just seeing me going through this," he told me. "I can see that it was putting her through a real difficult time. So, yeah, this had everything to do with it, I believe." As for himself, Soto-Fong said, "I just try to stay as busy as possible. Read. Work out. Write my family. I stay involved in my case a lot. I read a lot of transcripts and whatever my attorneys send me. . . . Just try to do whatever I can to keep myself busy."

He shows some bitterness toward his former attorney Jim Stuehringer, who now represents Ken Peasley. "To this day, I hold some, you know, a bit of anger towards him, and I just feel very betrayed," he said. But he also says he's confident that he, like McCrimmon and Minnitt, will one day be vindicated in the El Grande case. "I have no doubt," he said. "And I believe with all my heart that Peasley and Godoy know that I'm innocent."

Several years ago, during the bar proceedings against Peasley, Rick Lougee turned his attention to Soto-Fong. Working on his own time, along with a paralegal, Linda Lavis, Lougee became convinced of Soto-Fong's innocence and was just as obsessive on the subject as he was in pursuit of Peasley's disbarment. "My wife said this case would make me crazy," Lougee said, with a half smile. "She was right." Progress was as slow on Soto-Fong's case as it was on Peasley's, and Lougee has at times been despondent about that one, too. Two years ago, Lougee sent an e-mail to some lawyer friends that concluded, "Martin told Joe [Godoy] when he was arrested, 'You're framing me.' Martin was right. Godoy, Peasley and that prick, the ultimate prick Stuehringer, are trying to kill an innocent kid. Someone needs to stop this, but I can't do it alone. I'm tired, broke and nearly suicidal. Please help."

One day in Tucson, I asked Ken Peasley to take me to the El Grande Market. Reopened under new management and renamed Jim's, the market still looks much as it did in 1992, with long aisles full of inexpensive merchandise and a cash register near the front. Standing by the entrance, Peasley narrated his version of how the murders took place, largely on the basis of the fingerprint evidence and the testimony of Keith Woods. "Soto-Fong went to the produce counter, which used to be in the back, and picked up some cucumbers and lemons," Peasley said. "He put them down on the counter, and something happened between him and Mr. Gee, the owner. Something happened between the two of them, and then it became a fucking shooting gallery. They got about three hundred dollars, a hundred dollars a body. Strange thing was, there was all kinds of money in cigarette cartons in the back, but they didn't see it or something, because it was still there after the murders.

"Fong had worked there, so he knew they would recognize him," Peasley went on. "So if he was going to allow somebody to recognize him, they were going in there with the idea of taking the money and killing the people who were there. To this day, that's what I believe happened." Fingerprints identified as Soto-Fong's were found on plastic bags (which had contained the lemons and cucumbers), as well as on a food stamp, and that helped to convict him.

Lougee has tried mightily to discredit the fingerprint evidence. At the murder scene, he says, Godoy collected and processed the plastic bags in a haphazard way, and delayed forwarding them to the crime lab. It isn't clear whether the food stamp with Soto-Fong's fingerprints is the one that appears in photographs of the scene, and there was conflicting testimony about whether it came from the cash register or had been found on the floor near Gee's body. (Since Soto-Fong had worked at the El Grande a few months earlier, it would be possible for his prints to turn up there.) At the time of the investigation, the fingerprint examiner, Timothy O'Sullivan, who had made significant errors in earlier cases, was suffering from terminal cancer and was heavily medicated, raising questions about his focus and attention. It is peculiar that O'Sullivan, who died before the trial in 1993, identified only Soto-Fong's prints on the evidence, and not those of anyone else who worked at the store. It is also odd that other produce bags at the store had a red line across the top but the one with Soto-Fong's prints, did not.

"It's my resignation in the form of a graphic novel."

Nonetheless, by the time Peasley was disbarred, Lougee despaired of finding conclusive proof that Soto-Fong was innocent. Lougee could not look to Keith Woods, the dubious informant, for help. After testifying against the El Grande defendants, Woods moved to Nevada, where he was convicted on federal cocaine charges and sentenced to thirteen years in prison. In 2001, Woods pleaded guilty to possessing marijuana and heroin in prison and received a sentence of an additional twenty-seven months. (In response to a letter from me, Woods asked that he not be mentioned in this article.)

By now, Soto-Fong had been assigned new lawyers for a final appeal in federal court, so Lougee was ready to turn the files over to them. "I was so obsessed that my wife was getting ready to leave me," he told me. "I thought to myself, I don't need this anymore. I decided to take another murder case from the county, a woman named Carole Grijalva-Figueroa. Simple case. Shooting at a Circle K. And then one day Carole says to me, out of the blue, 'Do you remember El Grande?' "

To Lougee, the government's theory of the El Grande murders—that it was a botched robbery—never made much sense. The perpetrators allegedly stole just a few hundred dollars, and they left thousands more in cash lying around the store. Photographs from the night of the murders show several cigarette cartons full of cash that had been left in plain view. Peasley said that he thought the killers panicked and forgot to take the cash—or that they never saw the money in the first place—but the motivation for the murders had never been entirely clear.

The South Tucson neighborhood was full of drug dealing and, in the early nineties, a great deal of drug violence. In the days following the murders, Peasley and Godoy seem to have investigated the possibility that the murders had a drug connection. Godoy received a tip that a man named Ernest King, who had ties to the Tucson drug world, might have been involved in the murders at the El Grande. Godoy interviewed King, checked his prints, and gave him a lie-detector test, which he passed.

"We can tell when somebody's lying. We can smell these things," Godoy told me. "King was clean." Once Keith

Woods appeared on the scene, the investigation of a drug connection was dropped.

Carole Grijalva-Figueroa, who is thirty-four, was arrested in January, 2004, for her role in a fatal shooting outside a Circle K convenience store in Tucson. As part of a religious awakening, Lougee says, Grijalva-Figueroa has told him of her association with the city's drug underworld, and that included a connection to the El Grande murders. According to a transcript of a statement that Grijalva-Figueroa made to a private investigator, which she acknowledges in a brief telephone interview, the murders were a revenge killing over drugs. Grijalva-Figueroa said that, in June, 1992, a friend learned that about sixty-five pounds of cocaine that he partly owned had been stolen—and that "the El Grande guy" had tipped off the people who took it. As a result, her friend and two other men went to the store on the night of June 24th to exact retribution. "I was supposed to be the lookout," she said, adding that she waited in a gold Cadillac while three men went inside.

"I sat and I waited. Heard a bunch of yelling. And I heard shots," she said, according to the transcript. She drove the three men from the scene, and heard one of them say, "Did you see I got that motherfucker point-blank?" As for Martin Soto-Fong, Chris McCrimmon, and Andre Minnitt, Grijalva-Figueroa said that she didn't know them.

Grijalva-Figueroa's version of events raises many questions, as Lougee acknowledges. It is, for example, hard to square Grijalva-Figueroa's version with Soto-Fong's fingerprints on the plastic bags—if those bags were really the ones found by the register and those prints are really his. "I know it seems impossible that, out of all the cases in the world, I happen to get this woman out of the blue who solves the one case I've been obsessed with for years," Lougee said. "I know there will be people who think that I fed it to her, or she didn't say it, or that it's just too pat. I can't help it. But I believe her story is true." Grijalva-Figueroa, who is in protective custody, fears for her safety, and, according to Lougee, has said that she may deny any knowledge of the El Grande case if she feels that testifying will jeopardize her further. "How do you present a case like this to a jury?" Lougee said. "You're better off as a defense attorney if you can just point to a single lie or a couple of them. No one will ever believe you if you say the whole thing is a lie."

Kenneth Peasley isn't the only prosecutor who has got into trouble in Pima County lately. David White, who preceded Peasley as the head of the criminal division, failed to disclose more than eight hundred pages of potentially exculpatory documents to defense lawyers in a first-degree-murder case; the county was compelled to dismiss the charges. (White died in 2003.) In July, the Arizona Supreme Court suspended the law license of a third veteran prosecutor, Thomas Zawada, for six months and a day, because he made false accusations against defense lawyers in yet another first-degree-murder case.

In October, a prominent local doctor, Brad Schwartz, was charged with hiring a hit man to kill a former colleague, who was stabbed to death. Schwartz had been romantically involved with a onetime Pima County prosecutor, and had social ties with her former office; last month, LaWall fired a deputy county attorney and suspended three others who had apparently delayed sharing relevant information about the case with the police. In recent months, at least eight other prosecutors have retired or resigned—extraordinary turmoil in an office of only about sixty prosecutors. Still, in LaWall's opinion nothing is amiss. "I don't think any of the conduct of any of these men reflects on the office," she told me. "This is a good office."

The three men convicted in the El Grande case remain in prison. In 2004, the International Court of Justice, in The Hague, ordered the United States to grant new hearings to several condemned Mexican nationals, including Martin Soto-Fong, but it's not clear how that ruling will be applied. Through his new attorney, Gregory Kuykendall, Soto-Fong is seeking a writ of habeas corpus in federal court in Tucson, a case that would appear to be his final hope of avoiding execution. McCrimmon and Minnitt, incarcerated on Keith Woods's testimony in the Mariano's Pizza case, will not be eligible for release until about 2023. Lougee hopes to challenge McCrimmon's conviction in that case as well, but no appeal is yet pending.

Joe Godoy and Ken Peasley, still close friends, have joined forces in the private sector, working out of the historic downtown house that serves as the law offices of Brick Storts, a prominent Tucson defense attorney. Godoy is now an investigator, and Peasley is a consultant and a paralegal. (They are collaborating on Schwartz's defense.) Godoy is characteristically effervescent about his new role. "I have to work nights sometimes, just to keep up with my work. And I have a couple of guys working for me, and, gosh, I just got too much work," he said. "The people that know me know that I'm not a bad cop and that I'm not a bad person."

The lawyers in Storts's building have spacious offices in the front, but Peasley is wedged into a small room in the back, next to the parking lot. The papers on his desk are still arranged in orderly piles, and his prosecutor-of-the-year plaques hang on the stucco walls. While we were talking, a secretary came in to say that one of the lawyers was heading back from court, and Peasley almost sprinted out to the parking lot, to make sure that my car wasn't blocking the lawyer's way. "He hates when someone gets in his space," Peasley said.

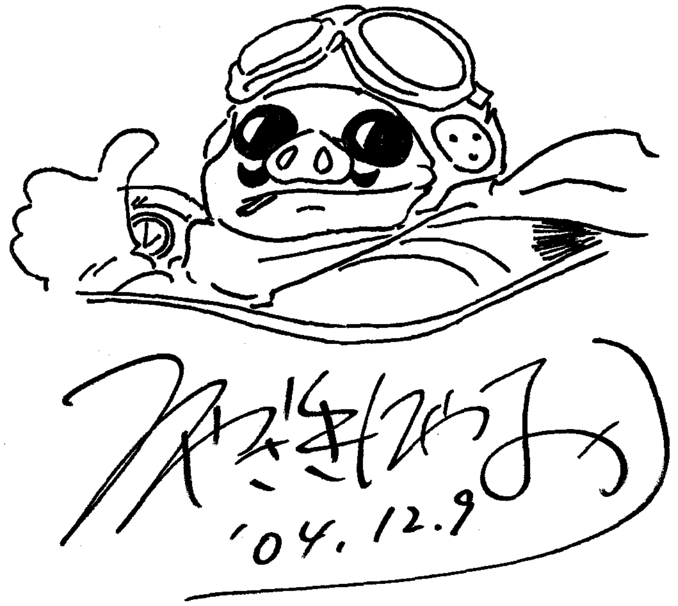
For now, Peasley is collecting his pension and marking time. He had a heart attack and quadruple-bypass surgery in 2003, but he has kept some of his old habits. "Cigars is what I do. And I shouldn't even do that," he said. "I shouldn't have done a lot of things. And, unfortunately, the reason I had the heart attack is I probably did everything that was bad for you for so many years it was inevitable that something was going to happen." He is not ready for the El Grande case to stand as his legacy. "It's disappointing," he said. "And the reason is, I worked real hard and, frankly, every case I handled was prosecuted with integrity. And for twenty-seven years I did it, and one case, basically, is the definition of what I've done. I mean, the best that I can hope to be remembered as is the guy who screwed up the triple-murder case." Peasley plans to apply for readmission to the bar as soon as he is eligible, in about four years. ♦

LETTER FROM JAPAN

THE AUTEUR OF ANIME

A visit with the elusive genius Hayao Miyazaki.

BY MARGARET TALBOT



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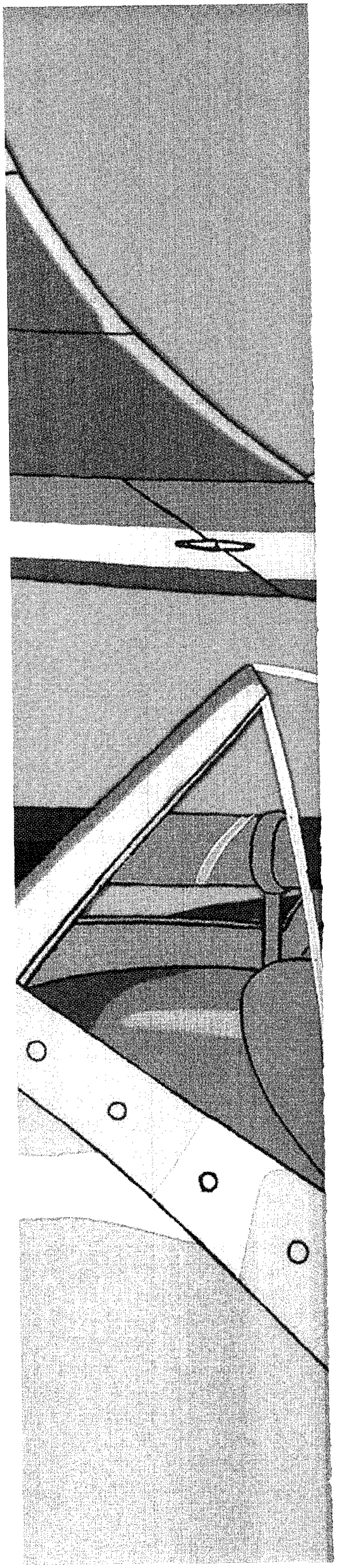
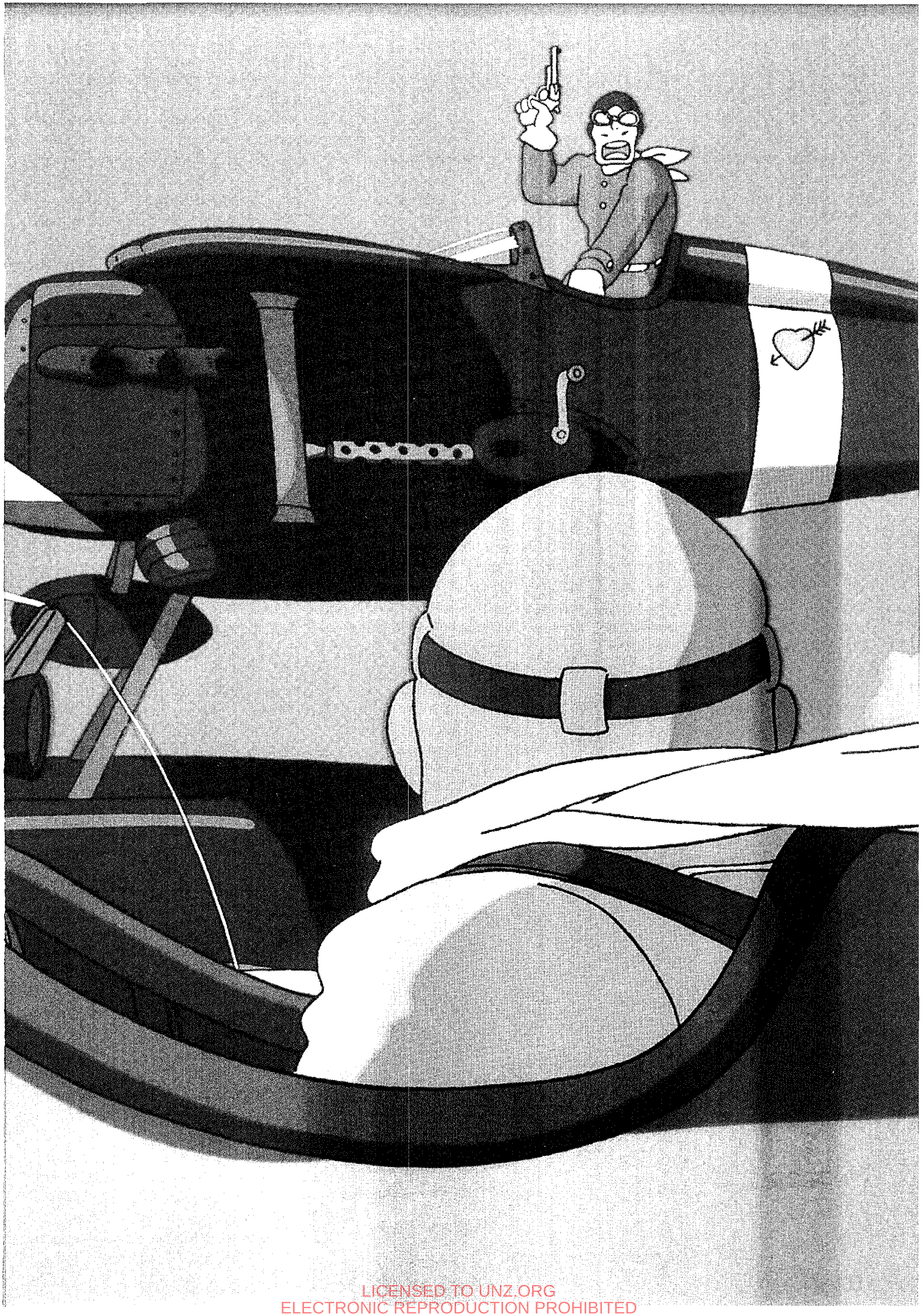
The building that houses the Ghibli Museum would be unusual anywhere, but in greater Tokyo, where architectural exuberance usually takes an angular, modernist form—black glass cubes, busy geometries of neon—it is particularly so. From the outside, the museum resembles an oversized adobe house, with slightly melted edges; its exterior walls are painted in saltwater-taffy shades of pink, green, and yellow. Inside, the museum looks like a child's fantasy of Old Europe submitted to a rigorous Arts and Crafts sensibility. The floors are dark polished wood; stained-glass windows cast candy-colored light on whitewashed walls; a spiral stairway climbs—inside what looks like a giant Victorian birdcage—to a rooftop garden of wild grasses, over which a hammered-metal robot soldier stands guard. In the central hall, beneath a high ceiling, a web of balconies and bridges suggests a dream vision of a nineteenth-century factory. Wrought-iron railings contain balls of colored glass, and leaded-glass lanterns are attached to the walls by wrought-iron vines. In the entryway, a fresco on the ceiling depicts a sky of Fra Angelico blue and a smiling sun wreathed in fruits and vegetables.

Situated in a park on the outskirts of Tokyo, the Ghibli Museum is dedicated to the work of Hayao Miyazaki, the most beloved director in Japan today, and—especially since his film "Spirited Away" won the Oscar for best animated film, in 2002—perhaps the most admired animation director in the world. Miyazaki's zeal for craft and beauty has set a new standard for animated films. With few exceptions, we seldom know the names of directors of children's films, but if you have seen a Miyazaki film you know his name. He not only draws characters and storyboards for the films he directs; he also writes the rich, strange screenplays, which blend



Miyazaki envisions himself as a pig in a 2004 self-portrait, and, opposite, a cel from "Porco Rosso" (1992), one of three Miyazaki films to be released in English this year.

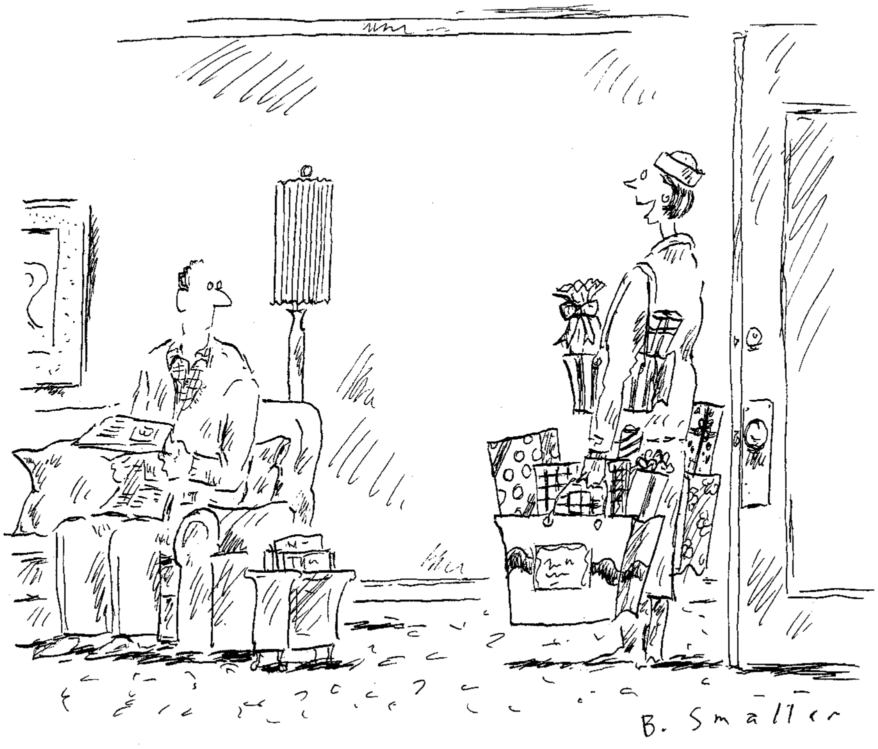


Japanese mythology with modern psychological realism. He is, in short, an auteur of children's entertainment, perhaps the world's first.

Miyazaki designed the Ghibli himself. The museum was partly funded by his movie studio—after which it is named—and is now a hugely popular, self-sustaining attraction. Though the museum is intended for children, who might be supposed not to care so much for beauty per se, it is, in nearly every detail, beautiful. A reproduction of the cat-shaped bus in Miyazaki's "My Neighbor Totoro" (1988), which is large enough for children to climb on, has glowing golden eyes, and fur both soft and bristly, like a caterpillar's. The museum showcases not only the visual splendor of Miyazaki's films but also what inspires them: among other things, a sense of wonder about the natural world; a fascination with flight; a curiosity about miniature or hidden realms. When I visited the museum this summer, it struck me as one of the few kid-oriented attractions I know that take seriously the notion of children as natural aesthetes—in part because it portrays for them a creative life that they might plausibly lead as adults.

One typical exhibit, "Where a Film Begins," depicts a room in which a young boy dreams up an idea for a movie. The room is supposed to be a study inherited from the imaginary boy's grandfather, and the mise en scène captures an idealized, slightly antique coziness; a glass jar of colored pencils sits atop a wooden desk, and worn tapestry pillows rest on a library chair. The display conjures a creative young mind's half-glimpsed notions and sudden enthusiasms: models of a flying dinosaur and a red biplane hang from the ceiling; thick books about birds and fish and the history of aviation occupy the bookshelves. As sentimental as it is, this room makes you think with pleasure about the dreamy stage that often precedes the making of art. Standing amid its congenial clutter, a child visitor can easily grasp how it is, as Miyazaki writes in the museum's catalogue, that "imagination and premonition" and "sketches and partial images" can become "the core of a film." Indeed, "Spirited Away," the story of a sullen ten-year-old girl who finds herself transported from an abandoned theme park into a ravishing spirit world, was inspired in part by Miyazaki's own visit to a peculiar outdoor attraction—a Tokyo museum where old Japanese buildings, including a splendid bathhouse, had been carted from their original locations.

Miyazaki is detail-oriented to the point of obsession—he travelled to Portugal just to look at a painting by Hieronymus Bosch that had long haunted him, and sent Michiyo Yasuda, the color designer for his films, to Alsace to scout hues for his latest movie—and so, too, is his museum. For the in-house theatre, which shows short films that he makes especially for the museum (including a sequel to "My Neighbor Totoro"), he hired an acoustic designer to create an uncommonly gentle sound system. Miyazaki wanted the opposite of the "tendency in recent Hollywood films," which is "to use heavy bass to try to pull the audience into the film." He thinks that movie theatres can be claustrophobic, even overwhelming places for young children, so he wanted his theatre to have windows that let in some natural light, bench-style seats that a child can't sink into, and films that make them "sigh in relaxation." Miyazaki fondly remembered the days when cigarette smoke in a theatre could draw your attention to the beam of light stretching from the projector, so he placed the projector in a glass booth that protrudes into the seating area. "I want to show children that moving images are enjoyed by having huge reels revolving, an electric light shining on the film, and a lot of complicated things being done," he explains in the museum's catalogue. Colleagues told him that projecting the films digitally would help preserve them, but Miyazaki relished the idea that, eventually, viewers might see "worn film with 'falling-rain' scratches on the screen."



"Surprise! It's my birthday."

To plan the menu for the museum café, Miyazaki hired not a professional chef but a woman who was a good home cook and had raised four children: he wanted homemade bread; *katosand*, breaded pork-cutlet sandwiches; and fresh vegetable soup. When he heard that children were prying open the little windows on a model of a house in the museum, and had broken the shutters, he was delighted, and placed pictures inside the house for kids to see. He painted several large murals—one of a commissary, another of an old animation studio—himself. Some of Miyazaki's ideas could not be realized. He had wanted to make a mountain of dirt at the Ghibli Museum—a mountain with muddy, slippery stretches where children "would fall and get scolded by their mothers." He had liked the idea, too, of a spiral staircase that gently swayed when you walked up it. These notions were eventually deemed unsafe or impractical, but,

PAGES 64-65: COURTESY HAYAO MIYAZAKI; RIGHT: PORCO ROSSO (KURENAI NO BUTA) © 1992 NIBARIKI · TNNG

over all, the museum still feels stubbornly, and joyfully, idiosyncratic.

Despite Miyazaki's fame—his latest film, "Howl's Moving Castle," grossed a record $14.5 million in its first week of release in Japan—he almost never grants formal interviews. Yet a few days after I visited the museum I was lucky enough to run into him during a tour of his nearby studio, and he began chatting amiably. It immediately became apparent why he was compelled to create imaginary worlds. A spry, slim man of sixty-three, with silver hair, parenthesis-shaped dimples, and thick, expressive black eyebrows, Miyazaki betrayed a profound dissatisfaction with modern life. He complained, "Everything is so thin and shallow and fake." He lamented the fact that children had become disconnected from nature, and fulminated about the deadening impact of video games on the imagination. Only half in jest, he said that he was hoping for the day when "developers go bankrupt, Japan gets poorer, and wild grasses take over." And the conversation grew only darker from there. A man disappointed, even infuriated, by the ugliness surrounding him, Miyazaki is devoted to making whatever he can control—a museum, each frame of a film—as gorgeous as it can be.

"Sure, we have common ground with Middle America—we're all carbon-based life forms."

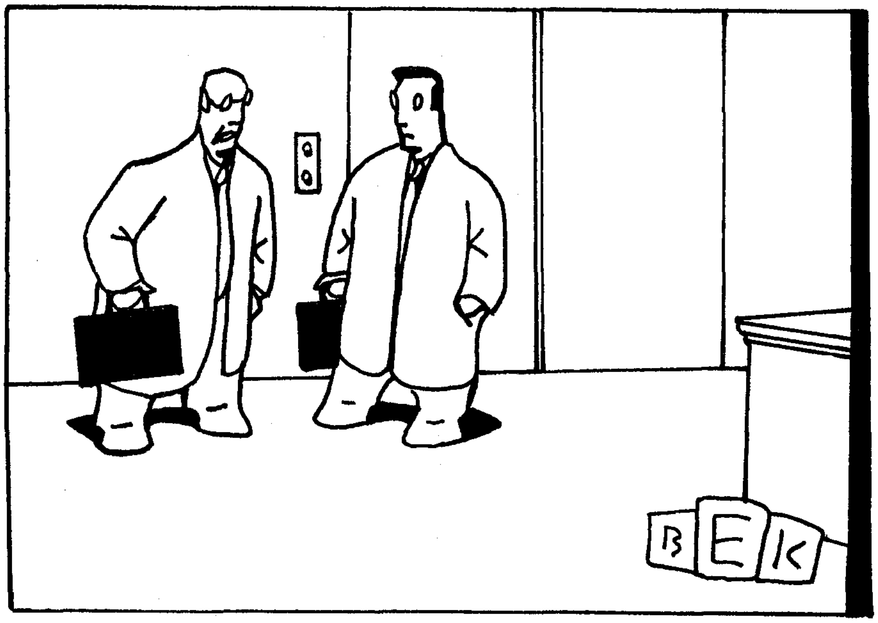
John Lasseter, the director of "Toy Story" and "A Bug's Life," is an ardent fan, and a friend, of Miyazaki's. He recently visited the Ghibli Museum with his sons. "You know how when you're watching a movie, you'll say, 'Wow, I've never seen that before'? With his films, that happens in every sequence," he said. "And he has such a big heart; his characters and his worlds are so rich. The museum is like having a place to visit those worlds. It's like when Disneyland first opened, in the fifties—visitors must have felt, in a very pure way, like they had walked inside a Disney film."

People have been invoking Miyazaki and Disney in the same breath for a long time, and in some ways it is an apt comparison. Miyazaki films are as popular in Japan as Disney films are in America. ("Spirited Away" is Japan's highest-grossing movie ever.) Miyazaki-inspired merchandise—such as plush versions of the Totoro, a rotund woodland creature of Miyazaki's devising—is nearly as ubiquitous in Japan as Disney stuff is here. Like Walt Disney, Hayao Miyazaki started his professional career drawing animation cels and rose to head an independent cartoon empire with a tentacular hold on kids' imaginations.

Yet, in themes and style, Miyazaki's eight films do not much resemble the Disney œuvre. Unlike Disney movies—so many of which are based on familiar fairy tales—Miyazaki's films are either original stories or his own adaptations of fairly obscure works. Though they contain set pieces of suspenseful action—he is particularly fond of airship battles and dramatic rescues in the sky—they have a much quieter, less frenetic feel. In part, this is because they are not musicals: no brassy showstoppers or treacly ballads interrupt the narratives. Moreover, his films rarely have villains of the scenery-chewing, extravagantly black-hearted Disney variety. Miyazaki sometimes forgoes villains altogether—as in "Totoro" and the charming "Kiki's Delivery Service" (1989), the story of an apprentice witch—making you forget what a fixture they are in other children's films. His is not a black-and-white moral universe: he has sympathy for the vain and the gluttonous and the misguided, a bemused tolerance for the poor creatures we all are. Some of his characters can be threatening or unappealing, but also complex and capable of change—like the moody young wizard in "Howl's Moving Castle," which will be released here later this year. It might be said that Miyazaki's malevolent characters are capable of redemption, except that redemption is too Christian an idea: it's more that they prove capable of a kind of shape-shifting, which allows them to reveal a different facet of themselves.

The absence of villains also means a refreshing absence of perfect and perfectly pretty heroines, their lives arcing toward romance. Miyazaki's protagonists are usually girls, and though they are likable and loyal, they tend to be ordinary children—which makes them extraordinary in the world of children's films. Miyazaki dwells on the latent phase of childhood, so that his girl characters are often close friends with boys. And they can be bratty and grievously sad, as well as plucky and resourceful.

In "My Neighbor Totoro," one of the loveliest children's films ever made, two sisters, Mei and Satsuki, are not idealized; they are at once goofy, brave, and vulnerable, like a lot of kids. The sisters have just moved with their father to a new house in rural Japan. Gradually, the two girls discover a host of strange but benign woodland creatures: fuzzy little soot sprites that hang out in old houses and hide when you



"Sometimes it's good just to have someone you can bounce heavy objects off."

turn on the lights; the plump, whiskered Totoros, who live in the roots of a giant camphor tree; and the marvellous cat bus, with its headlight eyes, caramel-colored stripes, and extra legs that function as wheels. (In a 1993 televised discussion between Miyazaki and the director Akira Kurosawa, Kurosawa mentioned how much he admired the sweetly surreal cat bus.) There is a gentle hint of Shintoism in all this: the father, an anthropologist, respectfully accepts the notion that the forest is presided over by spirits, though he is no longer able to see them, as his children can. Unlike the animals in most American cartoons, these creatures are not excessively anthropomorphized; they don't speak, which somehow makes them seem both more plausible and more dignified, and which gives the girls the delightful challenge of interpreting them. In fact, the film is focussed on dignifying the girls' imaginations, honoring their ability to partake in a fantasy that is both comforting and fortifying—for we gradually learn that they are separated from their mother, who is ill and in the hospital.

The tone of the film is dreamy and playful—it has the sun-soaked colors and languid pace of a summer afternoon in the country—but the way it melds such elements with a subtle psychological treatment of the children's anxiety over their mother makes it a radical film. When four-year-old Mei learns that her mother won't be coming home for a visit as planned, her grief takes the form of a tantrum. She howls—her mouth a black cavern, her arms stiff. (In Disney movies, children weep decorously or break into poignant song.) Satsuki, panicked and struggling to be the mature sister, shouts at her not to be so "stupid"; Mei runs away to the hospital to find her mother. Both girls are ultimately rescued by the cat bus, which opens up a warm, golden, womblike interior to them—an entrancing image of solace—and bounds across the countryside to return them to their father. Miyazaki is a master at conveying emotions as a child would experience them: obliquely, often physically, with a thread of magical thinking that promotes resilience.

Miyazaki's films are also striking for their preoccupation with the environment, and their not entirely metaphorical suggestion that the natural world is capable of remembering what's been done to it. (He believes that we harbor "memories in our DNA from before we took the form of humans.") "Nausicäa of the Valley of the Wind" (1984) is set in a post-apocalyptic world where humans live huddled on the edge of a toxic forest. Its heroine finds beauty in the lush, strangely colored undergrowth and the giant cicada-like insects that dwell there, nursing a grudge against the humans who've poisoned their habitat.

Miyazaki began his animation career in the nineteen-sixties, at a time when the economic miracle that had swiftly transformed postwar Japan into one of the strongest economies of the world was, almost as swiftly, obliterating its countryside. In the nineteen-eighties, the government cleaned up the worst industrial pollution, but Japan is still a country where developers (especially golf-resort planners) have free rein, where most people prefer nature in tamed and miniaturized form (bonsai, Zen gardens, lavishly packaged tiny melons), and where few places are untouched by commerce (there are vending machines on Mt. Fuji). "Spirited Away" contains a memorable scene in which a gloppy-looking creature—the spirit of a polluted river—comes to a bathhouse to be cleansed; a lot of dirty, foul-smelling labor is required. For this sequence, Miyazaki drew on his own memories of cleaning up a river—and pulling things like bicycles out of the muck.

Miyazaki's movies are threaded with other personal obsessions, just as samurai imagery pervades Kurosawa's work. Pigs, for example, turn up in many films. ("The behavior of pigs is very similar to human behavior," Miyazaki has said. "I really like pigs at heart, for their strengths as well as their weaknesses.") A 1992 film, "Porco Rosso," tells the story of a pig that flies—he's a pilot who works the skies over the Adriatic before the Second World War. In one tender scene, the pig recalls the air battle in which his fellow flying aces just kept ascending—floating ever upward into a cold empyrean death—while he, a more earthbound creature, could not face such self-sacrifice. Next month, Disney, the American distributor of Miyazaki's films, will release a video version of "Porco," whose title character will be voiced by Michael Keaton. It will also make available an English version of "Nausicäa," with voices by Uma Thurman and Patrick Stewart. With these two releases, the entirety of Miyazaki's eccentric output will be available in good English versions for the first time.

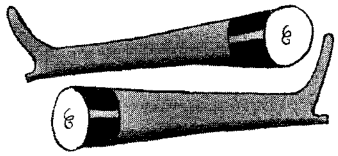
John Lasseter told me that when the animators at Pixar get stuck on a project they go into a screening room and watch a Miyazaki film. The irony of this admiration is that Miyazaki is an old-fashioned artist who has rejected the computerized path that many animation studios, including Pixar, have taken. (Last year, Disney closed down its hand-drawn-animation unit, in Florida, in favor of digitally rendered work.) Though Miyazaki incorporates some computer graphics in his films, he insists that all his characters and backgrounds be drawn by hand.

Toshio Suzuki, a wry, articulate man with close-cropped silver hair and an elfin grin, is Miyazaki's producer and longtime collaborator. "When silents moved to talkies, Chaplin held out the longest," he told me. "When black-and-white went to color, Kurosawa held out the longest. Miyazaki feels he should be the one to hold out the longest when it comes to computer animation." Miyazaki lavishes particular attention on his backgrounds, which are full of painterly flourishes. I'd never really noticed the colors in an animated film until I noticed his. Skies and seas are saturated in strangely emotional blues; wet halos surround the red lanterns and absinthe-green neon signs in "Spirited Away"; in "Kiki's Delivery Service," the young witch's dress isn't quite black—it's the smudged purple of the darkest plums.

Even Miyazaki's most outlandishly imagined creatures have an unnerving realism. The eerie, poignant No Face in "Spirited Away" is a creature who wears a mask, whimpers softly, and eats everything in sight, greedily eager for communion with others; he glides along like an inky rain cloud, and expands just as ominously. In the same film, a flock of white paper birds flash through the sky: they are like origami, only sharp-edged, and capable of drawing blood.

Miyazaki's starting point for a film, Suzuki said, is often a small visual detail. Five years ago, when Miyazaki read a Japanese translation of the book "Howl's Moving Castle," by Diana Wynne Jones, a British author, he was immediately taken with the idea of a castle that ambulates around the countryside. "The book never explains how it moves, and that triggered his imagination," Suzuki recalled. "He wanted to solve that problem. The first thing he did on the film was to start to design the castle. How would it move? It must have legs, and he was obsessed with settling this question. Would they be Japanese warrior legs? Human-type feet? One day, he suddenly said, 'Let's go with chicken feet!' That was, for him, the breakthrough." Suzuki thinks of Miyazaki's approach as uniquely Japanese: "In traditional Japanese architecture, you start with one room—maybe the alcove, where you hang some pictures. You spend a lot of time trying to pick the right shelves, the right little pillar, what kind of handles the drawers will have. Only when you finish that room do you worry about the next. In the West, you start from the general and go to the specific. A Hitchcock movie might start off with a panorama of the city, and then the camera closes in on a street, and a house, and then the stairway inside. If you're a Japanese filmmaker, you might start with the railing on the stairway. When Miyazaki makes a film, he is thinking, like with this new one, O.K., first off, here are two very important points to settle: Does Sophie, the little girl in the movie, have braids or not? Are they long or short?"

But it wouldn't be quite right to describe Miyazaki's approach as wholly Japanese. As with fantasy writers in the British tradition, from C. S. Lewis to J. K. Rowling, Miyazaki makes the details of the worlds he creates concrete and coherent, so that we might better suspend our disbelief for the big leaps of fantasy. This devotion to realism, Suzuki acknowledges, "is rare in Japanese animation," which tends to revel in the freedom from earthly laws that the medium allows. Miyazaki can be steely in pursuit of this goal. In a Japanese television documentary about "Spirited Away," he is shown at a meeting with his young staff, explaining how they are to draw certain images based on his storyboards. "The dragon is supposed to fall from down the air vent, but, being a dragon, it doesn't land on the ground," Miyazaki says. "It attaches itself to the wall, like a gecko. And then—ow!—it falls—thud!—it should fall like a serpent. Have you ever seen a snake fall out of a tree?" He explains that it "doesn't slither, but holds its position." He looks around at the animators, most of whom appear to be in their twenties and early thirties. They are taking notes, looking grave: nobody has seen a snake fall out of a tree.



Miyazaki goes on to describe how the dragon—a protean creature named Haku, who sometimes takes this form—struggles when he is pinned down. "This will be tricky," Miyazaki says, smiling. "If you want to get an idea, go to an eel restaurant and see how an eel is gutted." The director wriggles around in his seat, imitating the action of a recalcitrant eel. "Have you ever seen an eel resisting?" Miyazaki asks.

"No, actually," admits a young man with hipster glasses, an orange sweatshirt, and an indoor pallor.

Miyazaki groans. "Japanese culture is doomed!" he says. When he describes a scene in which his heroine, Chihiro, forces open the dragon's mouth to give it medicine, he says the animators should be thinking, as they draw, of what it's like to feed a dog a pill, when you tip its head to the side, and "the dog clenches its teeth and its gums stick out." There is more note-taking, but no sign that this might be a familiar experience.

"Any of you ever had a dog?" Miyazaki asks.

"I had a cat," somebody volunteers.

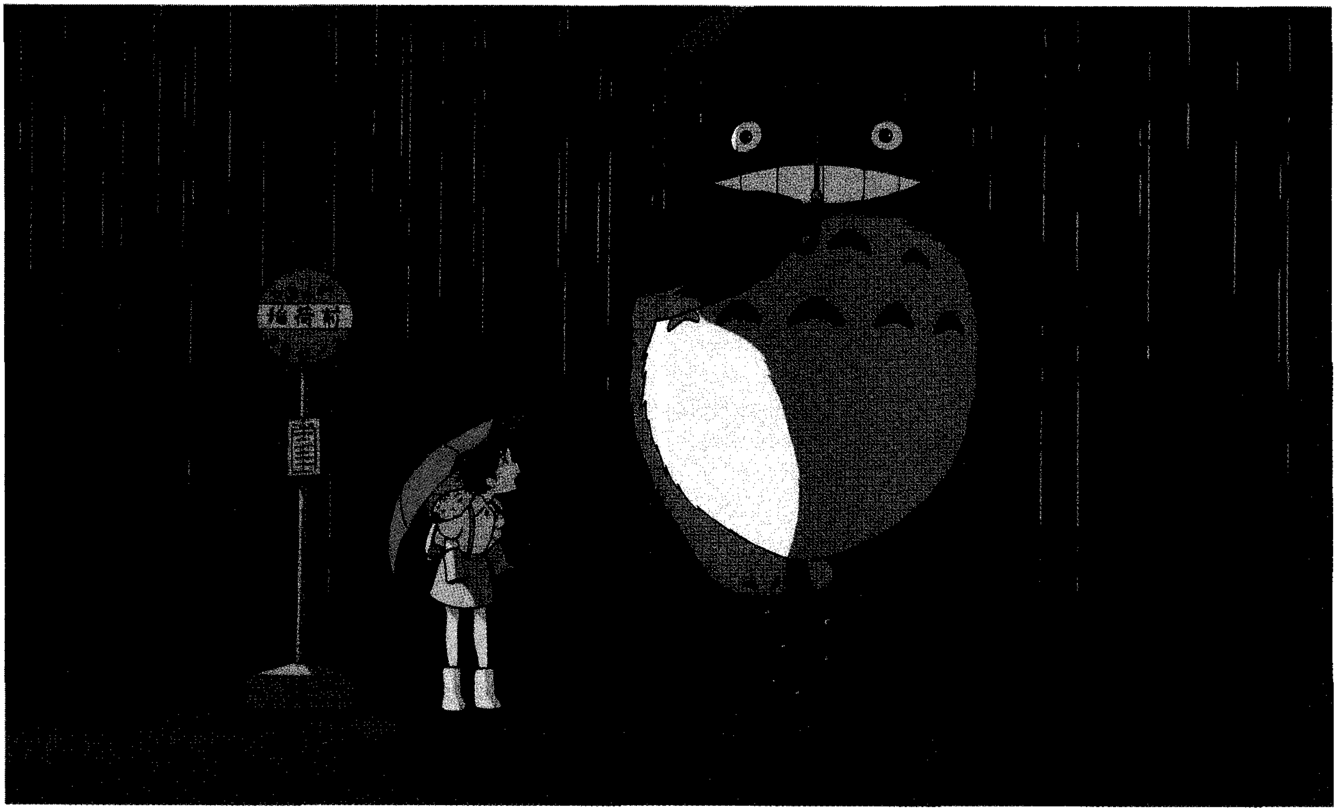
"This is pathetic," Miyazaki says. The documentary shows the chastened staff making a field trip that night to a veterinary hospital, videotaping a golden retriever's gums and teeth, and then returning to the studio to study the video.

It seems almost inevitable that the world's greatest animator should be Japanese. Over the past decade or so, Japan has become, outside the United States, the most successful exporter of children's pop culture. With television shows like "Pokémon" and "Yu-Gi-Oh!," which have large casts of creatures accompanied by their own stats and trading cards, the Japanese figured out how to tap into children's mania for collecting and classifying. With shows like "Hamtaro" ("Little Hamsters, Big Adventures") and "Sailor Moon" (in which giggly, shopaholic schoolgirls turn into saviors of the world), they got the idea that overmuscled superheroes, as alluring as they are, can seem out of reach, whereas smaller creatures that are simultaneously cute and powerful are easy to identify with. With Hello Kitty—the blank, big-headed cartoon cat—they proved that innocence was an aesthetic that could be pushed to extremes. Sanrio, the company that manufactures tens of thousands of Hello Kitty products—from pink vinyl coin purses to packets of "sweet squid chunks" bearing her wide-eyed likeness—is a billion-dollar business.

One reason the Japanese are so good at this kind of thing is that many adults in Japan are curiously attuned to cuteness. Even in a cosmopolitan city like Tokyo, *kawaii*—or "cute" culture—is everywhere: road signs are adorned with adorable raccoons and bunnies; stuffed animals sit on salarymen's desks; Hello Kitty charms are offered for sale at Shinto shrines. It is also a culture where anime (cartoons) and manga (comic books) are both widely consumed and, in some cases, highly regarded as art and literature. No one knows exactly why comic books are so popular in Japan; one theory is that they grew out of woodblock prints and seemed naturally connected to a broader artistic tradition that produced some of its best work on ephemeral, everyday objects like fans and screens. In any case, manga make up nearly half of the book sales in Japan, and you see people of all ages reading them on the subway. Animated programs, of which ninety or so air on Japanese TV every week, have long been shown in prime time, on the assumption that families will watch them together. And while much anime and manga is intended for adults—violent sci-fi and pornography, as well as contemplative family dramas—the market for children remains the largest. Although much of Japan's kid-oriented anime has been exported to the U.S., a great deal more—such as "Anpanman," a hugely popular series about a bean-paste-stuffed bread roll—has not. (A fan Web site notes, "To a non-Japanese person, the concept of a living bread superman who fights giant germs and feeds the hungry with pieces of his head may seem bizarre.")

Miyazaki distances himself from all this commercialism. He doesn't care for a lot of contemporary Japanese animation. "Animators are getting too old," he told me. "Animation used to be for young people. Now people in their forties are the ones who are supporting it." When he watches movies at all these days, he said, he prefers documentaries, especially "the simple ones that just try to show other people and other civilizations. They have their own distortions, but, still, I like them." He is a leftist who thinks that too many people are making money off children, who frets over the spectre of virtual reality "eating into our emotional life," and who wishes that we could drastically reduce the number of video games and DVDs available for sale. He worries that he is contributing to the problem by making anime himself, and isn't keen on promoting his own films, which is one reason that he resists giving interviews.

Several people who know Miyazaki told me that mothers frequently approach him to tell him that their child watches "Totoro" or "Kiki" every day, and he always acts horrified. "Don't do that!" he will say. "Let them see it once a year, at most!" In an essay he wrote in 1987, he was already concerned: "No matter how we may think of ourselves as conscientious, it is true that images such as anime stimulate only the visual and auditory sensations of children, and deprive them of the world they go out to find, touch, and taste." And yet he would not be quite the figure he is—recognized by children on the street, in a position to make just about any movie he wants—in a country that did not honor animation and fetishize childhood quite so much.



A cel from "My Neighbor Totoro," in which two sisters interact with a fantastical creature that only children can see.

MY NEIGHBOR TOTORO [TONARI NO TOTORO] © 1988 NIBARIKI • TOKUMA SHOTEN

Hayao Miyazaki was born in Tokyo in 1941. His father helped run a family-owned factory that made parts for military airplanes. His mother, like the mother in "Totoro," was sickly and often bedridden, but she was also smart and strong-willed. "My grandfather was affluent, and he knew how to live," Goro Miyazaki, one of the director's two sons, recalled. I spoke with him last summer at the Ghibli Museum, where he is the curator. "He liked to have fun—he liked to go to restaurants and movies. My grandmother was very intelligent and not particularly interested in going out. She had her own mind and she didn't like to spend money. She exerted a huge influence on Miyazaki. When he was young, he had all these questions—big ideas—and it was his mother he could talk to about them. He was one of four boys, and he was the closest to her."

His friend Suzuki was more direct. "He was a mama's boy," he said. Suzuki thinks the fact that there is always an old woman in Miyazaki's films, and that she is often a trenchant character, is a tribute to the director's mother. "When he was small, and his mother was ill, the four brothers took turns helping out with chores. But he loved her the best of all of them." (Like the tough grannies in his movies, Miyazaki's mother surprised everyone by living into old age.)

Neither of Miyazaki's parents was artistic. "My grandfather liked buying paintings, and he liked to show them off to guests," Goro Miyazaki said. "But I don't know that he had any particular artistic understanding. It's a mystery where Miyazaki's talent came from. He had a kind of a complex toward his brothers, and that gave him a strong motivation to succeed at animation. His brothers went into business; they were more influenced by their father. But success wasn't easy for him. He wasn't dexterous, and he really had to work to achieve what he has."

At Gakushuin University, in Tokyo, Miyazaki studied economics and political science. But he also joined a children's-literature group, where members read and discussed fantasy fiction. As a senior in high school, Miyazaki had sneaked out to see the first Japanese animated film made in color, "The Legend of the White Snake," when he was supposed to be studying for his entrance exams. The film had a big impact on him, he wrote years later, because while he could see that it was "cheap melodrama," its naked emotionalism touched him. "My soul was moved and I stumbled back home in the snow that had just started. Comparing my pitiful situation to the characters' earnestness, I was ashamed of myself, and cried all night." At the time, he had been trying to write a sophisticated, absurdist manga, but he realized, somewhat to his embarrassment, that he was more interested in creating something sincere.

In 1963, Miyazaki went to work as a rookie animator at Toei Animation, in Tokyo, which primarily made cartoons for television. The company's animation had a particular style—the style we associate with anime in general, though not so much with Miyazaki—and it derived mainly from economic necessity. Japanese studios were not the wealthy behemoths that Disney and Warner Bros. were, and they saved money by having animators draw fewer cels. The result was jerkier, with more stilted movements and longer closeups, in which faces often filled the screens: a kind of cut-rate Expressionism. The big, round eyes that Westerners associate with anime became signatures then—the legacy of Osamu Tezuka, the comic artist who, in the nineteen-fifties and sixties, drew Astro Boy and Kimba the White Lion. (One theory is that Tezuka was influenced by Betty Boop, who was very popular in Japan.) Miyazaki admired the soulful Tezuka, but his influences were more cosmopolitan: he loved Chagall, Bosch, and the Russian animators Lev Atamanov and Yuri Norstein, who made bewitching animations based on Russian folktales. His image of Japan was so shaken by memories of the country's postwar devastation that for years afterward, he told Kurosawa, his imagination turned reflexively to Europe—a fantasy version, stitched together in his mind, that had never experienced the Second World War. (In his films, Europe looks like a harmonious amalgam of Scandinavia, Alsace, and the Amalfi coast, with a bit of Dalmatia tossed in.)

At Toei, Miyazaki met Akemi Ota, an animator, whom he married in 1965, and who decided to stay at home when the couple's two sons were young. (Goro, who was a landscape designer before going to work at the Ghibli Museum, was born in 1967; Keisuke, an artist who makes intricate wood engravings, was born two years later.) On his first job at Toei, Miyazaki also met Isao Takahata, an animation director with an intellectual bent, who had graduated from the University of Tokyo with a degree in French literature; and Michiyo Yasuda, the gifted color designer, who went on to work on most of his films. The three of them were officials of the animation workers' union, and spent a lot of time during union meetings discussing their own artistic futures, which they were determined to entwine. "It wasn't too philosophical—more practical," Takahata recalled. " 'O.K., you're drawing a robot. It's got to be heavy. What kind of holes does it make in the ground when it moves?' We talked a lot about the challenges of depicting things correctly."

In the seventies, Miyazaki and Takahata both took jobs at Nippon Animation. Between 1974 and 1979, Miyazaki was a key artist or scene designer for five of Takahata's television series, including "Heidi," and worked on a film for television that Takahata directed: "Panda! Go Panda!," a funny, sweet movie featuring a spirited, pigtailed, pug-faced little girl—the precursor of Miyazaki's own heroines. "She was modelled on Pippi Longstocking," Yasuo Ohtsuka, an animator who worked with Miyazaki on several projects, said. "Miyazaki wanted to draw an audacious, energetic little girl—they're just a lot more fun to draw. We thought of her as a girl from American or European literature, because Japanese girls aren't—or weren't, anyway—all that high-spirited."

Miyazaki is a workaholic, and that tendency was in full force by then. "When I was small, he would come home at 2 A.M. and get up at 8 A.M. and do TV series all year round," Goro Miyazaki recalled. "It was very rare for me to see him. Every morning, I'd look into my father's bedroom and see him sleeping. Just to check: 'O.K., he's here. He's in the house.' " When, in his early thirties, Goro started working closely with his father for the first time, on the Ghibli Museum, he felt that he "understood his creative processes so well precisely because he'd been such an absent father. When I was a child, I studied him. To learn more about him, I watched his movies obsessively. I read everything that was written about him. I studied his drawings." With a rueful chuckle, he added, "I think that I am the No. 1 expert on Hayao Miyazaki."

When I asked Goro if he'd ever talked

with his father about what he'd learned about him, he laughed and said no, he couldn't picture that happening. He was closer to his mother, he said, who would take him hiking and mountain climbing, and who taught him the names of trees, flowers, and birds. But Goro did remember that after his father finished a production the family would celebrate with an eel dinner at a restaurant. When he pestered his father for toys, Miyazaki had shown him how to whittle instead—an ability for which he was now grateful. It left him with the feeling that no matter where he was he could make something with his hands.

As driven as Miyazaki was, he did not achieve fame overnight. He was in his late thirties by the time he had his first directing credit—for a Japanese TV series, "Future Boy Conan," as it's called, awkwardly, in English. And it wasn't until he wrote the manga "Nausicäa of the Valley of the Wind," and then received funding to make it into a movie, that he became widely known.

Toshio Suzuki met Miyazaki in 1978, when Suzuki was working as the editor of *Animage*, an animation magazine. He had been assigned to interview Miyazaki, but Miyazaki refused. "So I showed up at the studio, without phoning first, and Miyazaki ignored me," Suzuki told me. "He said only one thing: 'I'm busy. Go home.' I brought over a chair and sat down next to him. He said, 'What are you doing?' I said, 'I'm not going home until you say something to me.' I sat there till late at night, until he went home. The next day, I went back and sat down in that same place. On the third night, he finally spoke to me—to ask for advice. He asked about whether there was a specific term for this kind of car chase he was doing. I told him what the name was; we talked about other things, and after a while he consented to an interview. But then we tried to take a photo. He didn't want a photo. Only from the back. So I got pissed. I ran the shot and I did a little caption for it: 'A very rare photo of the back of Hayao Miyazaki's head.' That was my revenge. Starting from that day, we've been working together for twenty-five years, and I have seen him nearly every day."

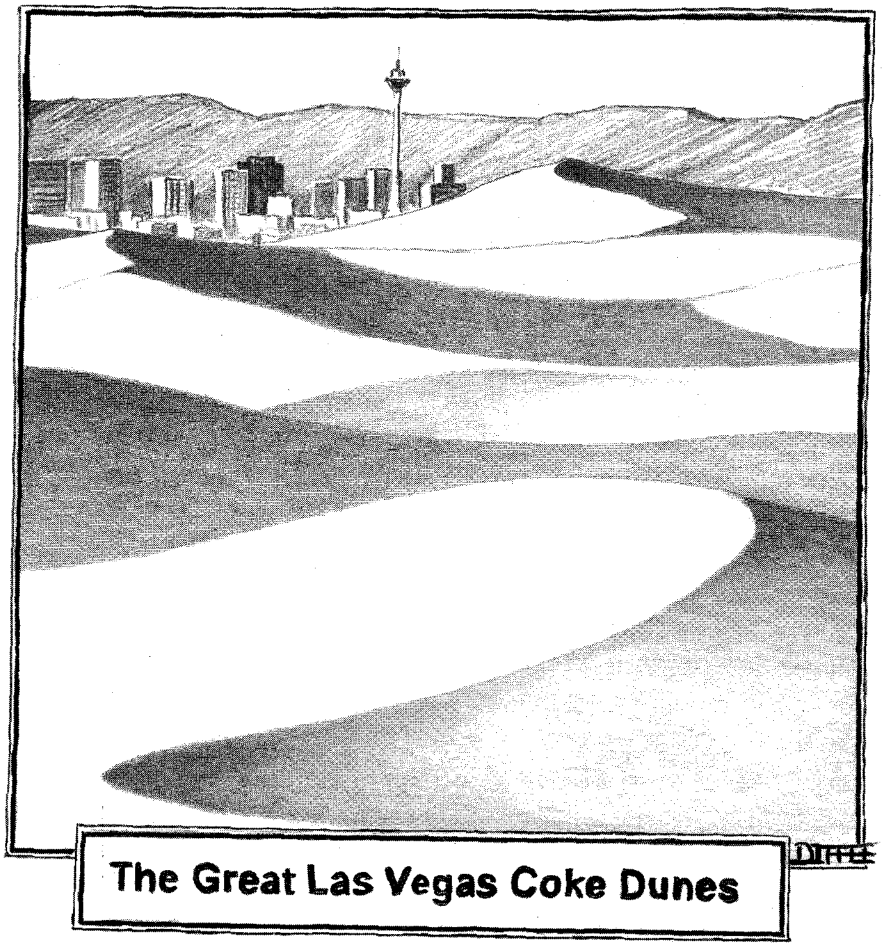
In 1985, Tokuma Shoten, the publishing company, which had released the manga of "Nausicäa," opened an anime studio, Ghibli; Toshio Suzuki, Isao Takahata, and Hayao Miyazaki became its directors. The name was Miyazaki's choice; *ghibli* is a word that Italian pilots once used to describe a wind blowing from the Sahara. To Miyazaki, the name conveyed a message, almost a threat—something like "Let's blow a sensational wind through the Japanese animation world," Suzuki recalled, in a speech years later. The studio would produce animation that, as Suzuki put it in his speech, "illustrates the joys and sorrows of life as they really are" and, as Miyazaki put it in the Ghibli Museum catalogue, shows "how complex the world is and how beautiful the world should be."

Miyazaki threw himself into the project single-mindedly. "He would work from nine to four-thirty in the morning," Suzuki said. "And he didn't take holidays. He changed quite a bit when he turned fifty—he figured maybe he should take off a Sunday now and then. Now he tends to leave at midnight." (Miyazaki told me, "I don't take long vacations. I don't have the time. My idea of a vacation is a nap.")

Studio Ghibli's first film was "Castle in the Sky" (1986), a fable featuring a gutsy girl from another planet, a gallant boy from a Welsh mining village, a magical crystal pendant, and a variety of flying machines that look like futuristic imaginings from the nineteenth century. Neither it nor "Totoro" nor "Grave of the Fireflies" (1988)—an almost unbearably sad film, directed by Takahata, about two Japanese children fleeing fire-bombing raids in the last days of the Second World War—did well at the box office, though they received great reviews. But the "Totoro" characters had staying power: two years after the film was released, Ghibli licensed the merchandising of Totoro stuffed animals, and, when sales took off, the studio was able to cover any deficit in its production costs. And in 1989 the studio had its first hit, "Kiki's Delivery Service." (The apprentice witch, modelled on Suzuki's teen-age daughter, leaves her family for a time to live in a coastal city in Miyazaki's Europe, starting her own business delivering parcels by broomstick.) "Kiki" was seen by 2.6 million people, becoming the most popular domestic movie in Japan that year.

"Not tonight, hon—I've got a heartache."

At that point, Miyazaki floated the idea of disbanding the studio. "He felt that after directing three films, made with the same group of people, the human relationships had become too tangled," Suzuki recalled. He eventually convinced Miyazaki that closing shop would be a mistake. (Suzuki is perhaps one of the few people, if not the only person, who can talk Miyazaki into anything. "He knows how to handle Miyazaki," Takahata said. "He knows that it's like dealing with a child: when


The Great Las Vegas Coke Dunes

you want something, you say the opposite, because you know he'll say no to your suggestion.")

The studio became successful to the point that the staff was working on two projects at once. Miyazaki, Suzuki recalled in his speech, "came up with a proposition: Let's build a new studio!" He went on, "It was the Miyazaki way: when facing a problem, try to find a breakthrough by coming up with a much bigger problem."

The day I spoke with Suzuki, he was wearing black jeans and a T-shirt, and was chain-smoking. "Young people, unknown people with aspirations—they are very pure, honest, and so on," he said. "Miyazaki saw that I was not that type, and he liked that." Suzuki is the public face of Ghibli. He, not Miyazaki, attended the Venice Film Festival, in September, where "Howl's Moving Castle" won an award for technical achievement. He's funny and shrewd, and he fills in for the interview-shy Miyazaki with flair. Suzuki told me, "Just recently, Miyazaki-san came into my room at night and we had a talk—just the two of us. He said, with a very serious look, 'What are we going to do about Studio Ghibli? There aren't many young talents out there.' He said, 'I think I can do this another ten years.' I said 'You can? Another ten years?' Japanese fans tell him, 'Please keep making animation.' I'm the only person in Japan who hopes he will retire soon."

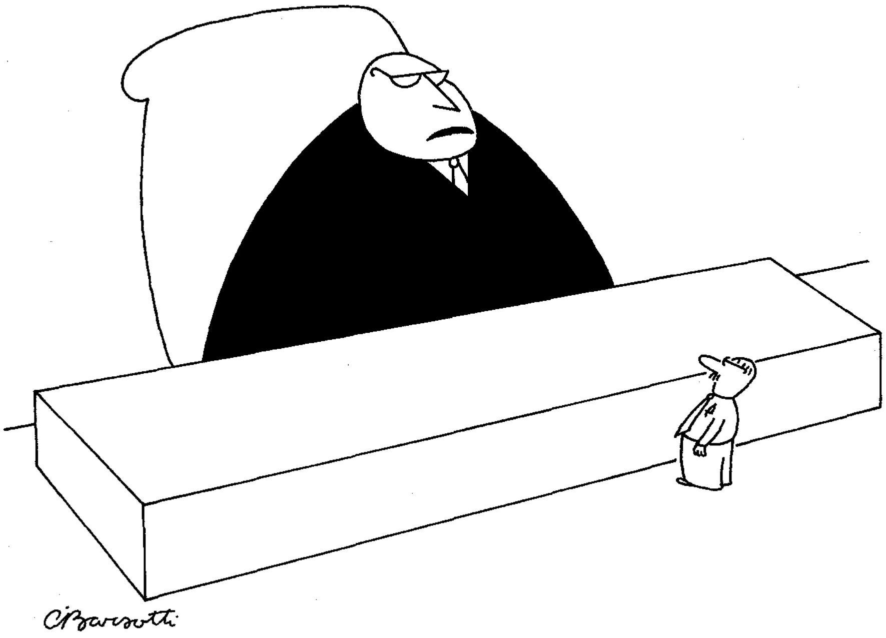
Takahata and Miyazaki, who worked together so closely for years, have lately moved in different directions. Takahata is more interested in literary and film theory, more cerebral and less enamored of magic. His films are not for children, and "Grave of the Fireflies" could easily have been a live-action film. Takahata is sixty-nine, but he has a formidable head of dark hair and a handsome, unwrinkled face. "With Miyazaki, you have to totally believe in the world of the film," Takahata told me. "He is demanding that the audience enter the world he has created completely. The audience is being asked to surrender." He paused. "I want the audience to have a little distance. My relationship with him is limited now. We are friends but we don't have a direct working relationship."

For many viewers, of course, surrendering to Miyazaki is a pleasure. Weeks after I saw "Spirited Away," I was still thinking of the scene in which Chihiro takes a train trip, in the company of No Face, to seek out a witch who may help her save her friend. The sequence is both emotionally precise and fantastical. It's like every solitary journey you've ever taken, when you felt lonely and a little exalted, but it is also deeply strange, for the train glides, stately and surreal, over a translucent blue sea, while the sky slowly ripples through the possibilities of a sunset, from the pink of crushed petals to a soft, forgiving black.

On the wall of one of the Studio Ghibli buildings is a kind of joke about Miyazaki's fears of invasion: two aluminum poles and two red hard hats on pegs. The staff was free to borrow them, Miyazaki explained to his colleagues, in order to repel unwanted visitors. But during my visit to the studio Steve Alpert, an American who heads Ghibli's overseas division, showed me around, and in an upstairs room I saw Miyazaki hanging out with a couple of animators. He had shown the completed "Howl's Moving Castle" to his wife and the Ghibli staff that day. He was in a relaxed mood, and when I started asking him questions, through a translator, he started answering.

Miyazaki's hair was parted on the side, and a luxuriant hank of it fell over one eye periodically, Veronica Lake style. He wore big oblong glasses, gray slacks, a light-blue short-sleeved shirt, and straw-soled sandals with white socks. At first glance, he seemed full of suppressed amusement—even jolly.

Today, Miyazaki announced cheerfully, marked the last time that he would watch "Howl's Moving Castle." "I never watch my films after they've left the studio, because I've lived it and I know exactly where I've made mistakes," he said. "I'd have to sort of cringe and hide, just close my eyes. 'Oh, right, I remember that mistake, and that one.' You don't have to go through that torment over and over." The remark was punctuated with a giddy, slightly maniacal laugh—more of a gig-



"Understand, Richardson, I don't believe in evolution, but I do believe in Darwinism."

• •

gle, really. In any case, he said, he was already planning his next project: a short film for the museum. "I have several I have to make. What can I do? I have to keep feeding my staff," he said, gesturing toward a group that had gathered around us. "Look at all the mouths I've got to feed here."

I asked him what had attracted him to "Howl's Moving Castle." He said, "Sophie, the girl, is given a spell and transformed into an old woman. It would be a lie to say that turning young again would mean living happily ever after. I didn't want to say that. I didn't want to make it seem like turning old was such a bad thing—the idea was that maybe she'll have learned something by being old for a while, and, when she actually is old, make a better grandma. Anyway, as Sophie gets older, she gets more pep. And she says what's on her mind. She is transformed from a shy, mousy little girl into a blunt, honest woman. It's not a motif you see often, and, especially with an old woman taking up the whole screen, it's a big theatrical risk. But it's a delusion that being young means you're happy."

Miyazaki puffed on a cigarette. "Some people may say this girl is a lot like Chihiro. Maybe. But I don't fear that. I think I'd lose a lot more by trying to avoid repeating myself than by just repeating myself. Some people are always trying radically new material. I know what I want, and I'll continue with it." He went on, "I don't have much patience for calculating and intellectualizing anymore. It has to do with the times. Nobody knows everything. Nobody knows what's going to happen. So my conclusion is, don't try to be too smart and wise. Why does anybody feel the way they do? Why is somebody depressed? Or angry? Even if you have a therapist, you're never going to figure it out. You're not going to solve it. Besides, every trauma is an important part of you."

Miyazaki cradled the back of his head with his hand. "I've done things in this movie I wouldn't have done ten years ago," he said. "It has a big climax in the middle, and it ends with a resolution. It's old-fashioned storytelling. Romantic." Indeed, "Howl's Moving Castle" has the first kiss ever in a Miyazaki film, and contains more of an overt love story. "Howl's" doesn't have the elegiac beauty of certain sequences in "Spirited Away," nor does it have the emotional delicacy of "Totoro." (The Howl character, a vain, reclusive boy wizard who dresses in capes and epauletted jackets, reminded me somehow of Michael Jackson.) But it does have the director's commanding sense of magic, along with a windy, wildflower-strewn Alpine landscape, and an amusingly cranky fire demon named Calcifer. And the living, breathing, clanking castle is one of Miyazaki's most marvellous designs: it looks like a giant teakettle bristling with turrets and balconies, and shifts about in its metal skin like a rhino, striding across the countryside on, yes, chicken feet.

The afternoon was warm, and outside the window cicadas were making a racket. Miyazaki continued to look twinkly, but nonetheless he began airing a briskly dire view of the world. "I'm not jealous of young people," he said. "They're not really free." I asked him what he meant. "They're raised on virtual reality. And it's not like it's any better in the countryside. You go to the country and kids spend more time staring at DVDs than kids do in the city. I have a place in the mountains, and a friend of mine runs a small junior-high school nearby. Out of twenty-seven pupils, he told me, nine do their schoolwork from home! They're too afraid to leave their homes." He went on, "The best thing would be for virtual reality just to disappear. I realize that with our animation we are creating virtual things, too. I keep telling my crew, 'Don't watch animation! You're surrounded by enough virtual things already.' "

We walked out to the rooftop garden that Goro had designed as a place where staff could rest and recharge. The studio's four small buildings are lovely, and are complete with Miyazakian refinements. In some workspaces where he thought there wasn't enough light or hint of the outside, he had trompe-l'oeil windows painted that depict meadows beneath cerulean skies. The building containing his office—which he refers to as "the pig's house"—looks like an elaborate Swiss châlet, with a steep narrow stairway made of laminated blocks of golden pine, and a flying bridge with small doorways on either side. Once, Alpert told me, when Miyazaki looked out and noticed a procession of preschoolers walking by on the street, he invited them in, "and just gave them free rein and they ran up and down the stairs and onto the bridge, screaming and laughing."

From the garden, we could hear taiko drums thumping out a dance for a neighborhood festival, and see a flamboyant sunset over the old pine trees that remain in this neighborhood, unlike in so many others around Tokyo. With surprising enthusiasm, Miyazaki brought up the subject of environmental apocalypse. "Our population could just suddenly dip and disappear!" he said, flourishing his cigarette in the air. "I talked to an expert on this recently, and I said, 'Tell me the truth.' He said with mass consumption continuing as it is we will have less than fifty years. Then it will all be like Venice. I think maybe less, more like forty. I'm hoping I'll live another thirty years. I want to see the sea rise over Tokyo and the NTV tower become an island. I'd like to see Manhattan underwater. I'd like to see when the human population plummets and there are no more high-rises, because nobody's buying them. I'm excited about that. Money and desire—all that is going to collapse, and wild green grasses are going to take over."

He said that he'd visited the office tower of NTV, a Japanese television network, the day before: "I climbed two hundred and six metres up, to where the red lights are to warn the planes. You could see the whole city. And I thought, This place is haunted, doomed. All those buildings. All those cubicles."

Suzuki joined us, and Takahata sat down without greeting anyone, delicately removing an enormous black ant from his pants leg. He said that he'd been reading a French novel in which ants are highly intelligent and can read. Somebody mentioned E. O. Wilson's work on insects and their elaborate forms of communication.

"How are your frogs, by the way?" Suzuki asked Miyazaki, who explained that he kept them in a pond at home.

"I'm trying to keep track of how many tadpoles I have, but how can I? I can't write numbers on their backs."

The three men talked for a while about frogs and dragonflies and cicadas, and how the Japanese grasshopper population is declining because of overdevelopment. All of them warmed to the topic. "There's an abandoned house near mine, and I want to buy it and keep it wild," Miyazaki said. "Let all the wild grasses grow over it. It's amazing how much they grow—their living energy. I wouldn't cut the grass at all, but then there's always the old ladies who come along with their hedge trimmers and scold you. We'll have to wait for that generation to die off. Until then, we'll never see grass like I want to see grass."

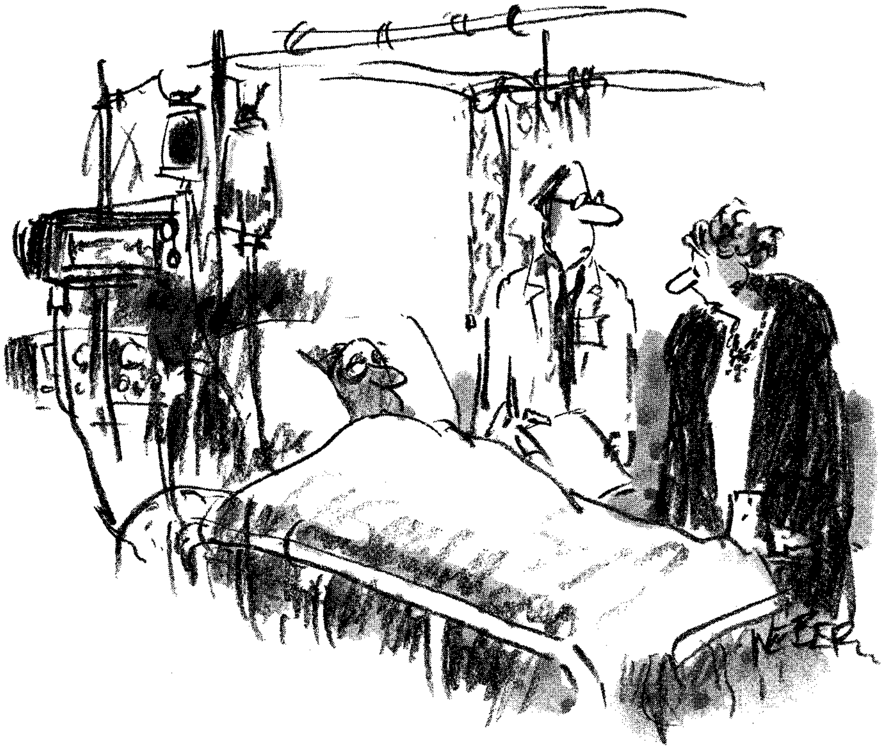
He was not a gardener himself, he said. "Gardening is my wife's territory. But, when she gardens, it's like a holocaust. You see a bug? It's evil. You have to exterminate it. Even the weeds—poor plants—she just yanks them out." He smiled. "It's not ecological at all. It's fascism." Japan should start a new form of agriculture, he proclaimed, then admitted, "I can't do it. I'm not the farmer type, so I just complain."

I noted that he had donated the "Totoro" licensing rights to a nature trust to help buy up some nearby woodlands and preserve them from development. "Oh, it's not much of a wood, but we try to do something," he said. Takahata spoke up: "If you add up all the land you've saved, it's vast." Miyazaki shrugged.

I asked him if he'd ever want to live anywhere else—he seemed so bitter about Japan's environmental depredations. "No," he said. "Japan is fine—because they speak Japanese. I like Ireland, though, the countryside there. Dublin has too many yuppies, computer types, but I like the countryside, because it's poorer than England." He mentioned liking Potsdam, in Germany, and the decrepit castle at Sans Souci. "Sometimes I encounter places that I feel as though I saw as a boy. A certain light in an old kind of town. Like in Tarkovsky's films, that feeling is always there. I felt that way about a town in Estonia that I visited." Miyazaki added that he didn't really find travel relaxing; he found walking relaxing—that was the way human beings were meant to relax, and he expressed the wish that he "could walk back and forth to work every day, except that it would take two and a half hours each way," and then he wouldn't have enough time to work.

This remark suddenly seemed to remind him of all the work that he had to do. Miyazaki turned to leave, and Suzuki and Takahata, along with other staff members, began drifting away.

On the train ride back to downtown Tokyo, I thought about how kind and humane Miyazaki's films typically are, and how harsh he had often sounded in person. I decided to admire this dichotomy as an example of what the social critic Antonio Gramsci called "pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will." An interviewer once remarked to Miyazaki that his movies expressed "hope and a belief in the goodness of man." Miyazaki replied that he was, in fact, a pessimist. He then added, "I don't want to transfer my pessimism onto children. I keep it at bay. I don't believe that adults should impose their vision of the world on children. Children are very much capable of forming their own visions." ♦

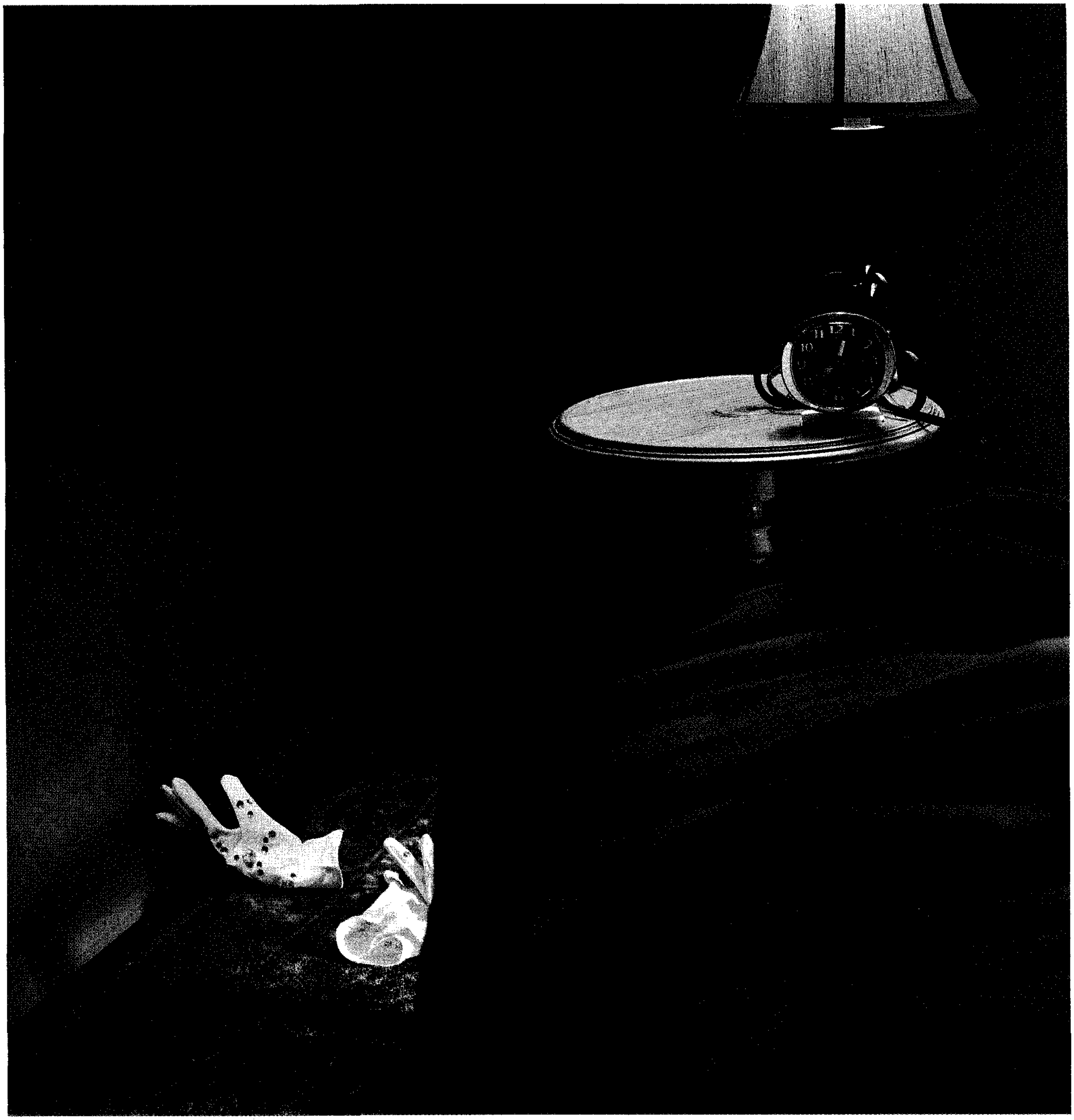


"I can't believe this is happening to me."

FICTION

THE JUNIPER TREE

BY LORRIE MOORE



The night Robin Ross was dying in the hospital, I was waiting for a man to come pick me up—a man she had once dated, months before I began to—and he was late and I was wondering whether his going to see her with me was even wise. Perhaps I should go alone. Our colleague ZJ had called that morning and said, "Things are bad. When she leaves the hospital, she's not going home."

"I'll go see her tonight," I said. I felt I was a person of my word, and by saying something I would make it so. It was less like integrity, perhaps, and more like magic.

"That's a good idea," ZJ said. He was chairman of the theatre department and had taken charge, like a husband, since Robin had asked him to. His tearfulness about her fate had already diminished. In the eighties, he had lost a boyfriend to AIDS, and now all the legal and medical decision-making these last few months, he said, seemed numbly familiar.

But then I found myself waiting, and soon it was seven-thirty and then eight and I imagined Robin was tired and sleeping in her metal hospital bed and would have more energy in the morning. When the man I was waiting for came, I said, "You know? It's so late. Maybe I should visit Robin in the morning, when she'll have more energy and be more awake. The tumor presses on the skull, poor girl, and makes her groggy."

"Whatever you think is best," said the man. When I told him what ZJ had said, that when Robin left the hospital she wasn't going home, the man looked puzzled. "Where is she going to go?" He hadn't dated Robin very long, only a few weeks, and had never really understood her. "Her garage was a pig sty," he once said. "I couldn't believe all the crap that was in it." And I had nodded agreeably, feeling I had won him; my own garage wasn't that great, but whatever. I had triumphed over others by dint of some unknowable charm. Now I was coming to realize that a lot of people baffled this guy, and that I would be next to become incomprehensible and unattractive. That is how dating among straight middle-aged women seemed to go in this college town: one available man every year or so just made the rounds of us all. "I can share. I'm good at sharing," Robin used to say, laughing.

"Well, I'm not," I said. "I'm not good at it in the least."

"It's late," I said again to the man, and I made two gin rickeys and lit candles.

Every woman I knew here drank—nightly. In rejecting the lives of our mothers, we found ourselves looking for stray volts of mother-love in the very places they would never be found: gin, men, the college, our own mothers, and one another. I was the only one of my friends—all of us academic transplants, all soldiers of art stationed on a far-off base (or so we imagined it)—who hadn't had something terrible happen to her yet.

The next morning I dressed in cheery colors. Orange and gold. There was nothing useful to bring Robin, but I made a bouquet of cut mums nonetheless and stuck them in a plastic cup with some wet paper towels holding them in. I was headed toward the front door when the phone rang. It was ZJ. "I'm leaving now to see Robin," I said.

"Don't bother."

"Oh, no," I said. My vision left me for a second.

"She died late last night. About two in the morning."

I sank down into a chair, and my plastic cup of mums fell, breaking two stems. "Oh, my God," I said.

"I know," he said.

"I was going to go see her last night but it got late and I thought it would be better to go this morning when she was more rested." I tried not to wail.

"Don't worry about it," he said.

"I feel terrible," I cried, as if this were what mattered.

"She was not doing well. It's a blessing." From diagnosis to decline had been precipitous, I knew. She had started the semester teaching, then suddenly the new chemo was not going well and she was lying outside the emergency room, on the concrete, afraid to lie down inside because of other people's germs. Then she was placed in the actual hospital, which was full of other people's germs. She'd been there almost a week and I hadn't made it in to see her.

"It's all so unbelievable."

"I know."

"How are *you*?" I asked.

"I can't even go there," he said.

"Please phone me if there's something I can do," I said emptily. "Let me know when the service will be."

"Sure," he said.

I went upstairs and with all my cheery clothes on got back into bed. It still smelled a little of the man. I pulled the sheet over my head and lay there, every muscle of my body strung taut. I could not move.

But I must have fallen asleep, and for some time, because when I heard the doorbell downstairs and pulled the sheet off my face it was already dark, though the sun set these days at four, so it was hard ever to know by just looking out the window what time it might possibly be. I flicked on the lights as I went—bedroom, hall, stairs—making my way down toward the ringing bell. I turned on the porch light and opened the door.

There stood Isabel, her left coat sleeve dangling empty at her side, and Pat, whose deep eyes looked crazy and bright as a dog's. "We've got the gin, we've got the rickey mix," they said, holding up the bags. "Come on. We're going to go see Robin."

"I thought Robin died," I said.

Pat made a face. "Yes, well," she said.

"That hospital was such a bad scene," said Isabel. She was not wearing her prosthetic arm. Except in pieces choreographed by others, she almost never did anymore. "But she's back home now and expecting us."

"How can that be?"

"You know women and their houses," said Pat. "It's hard for them to part company." Pat had had a massive stroke two years ago, which had wiped out her ebullient personality and her short-term memory, but periodically her wounded, recovering brain cast about desperately and landed on a switch and threw it, and she woke up in a beautiful manic frenzy, seeming like the old Pat, saying, "I feel like I've been asleep for years," and she would stay like that for days on end, insomniac and babbling and reminiscing, painting her paintings, then she'd crash again, passive and mute. She was on disability leave and had a student living with

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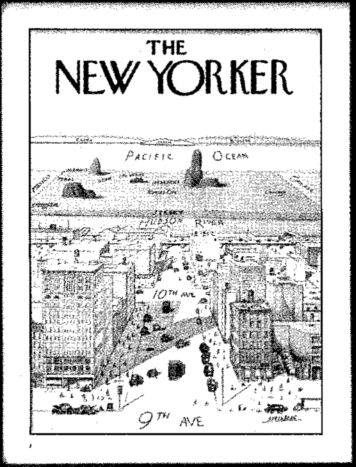

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her full time who took care of her.

"Maybe we all drink too much gin," I said.

For a moment there was just silence. "Are you referring to the accident?" said Isabel accusingly. It was a car crash that had severed her arm. A surgeon and his team of residents had sewn it back on, but the arm had bled continually through the skin grafts and was painful—her first dance afterward, before an audience, a solo performed with much spinning and swinging from a rope, flung specks of blood to the stage floor—and after a year, and a small, ineffectual codeine habit, she went back to the same surgeon and asked him to remove it, the whole arm: she was done, she had tried.

"No, no," I said. "I'm not referring to anything."

"So, hey, come on, come on!" said Pat. The switch seemed to have been thrown in her. "Robin's waiting."

"What do I bring?"

"Bring?" Pat and Isabel burst out laughing. "You're kidding, right?"

"She's kidding," said Isabel. She felt the sleeve of my orange sweater, which I was still wearing. "Hey. This color looks nice on you. Where did you get this?"

"I forget."

"Yeah, so do I," said Pat, and she and Isabel burst into fits of hilarity again. I put on shoes, grabbed a jacket, and left with them.

Isabel drove, one-armed, to Robin's. When we arrived, the house was completely dark, but the street lights showed once more the witchy strangeness of the place. Because she wrote plays based on fairy tales, Robin had planted in the yard, rather haphazardly, the trees and shrubs that figured most prominently in the tales: apple, juniper, hazelnut, and rose shrubs. Unfortunately, our latitude was not the best gardening zone for these. Even braced, chained, and trussed, they had struggled, jagged and leggy; at this time of year, when they were leafless and bent, one couldn't say for sure whether they were even alive. Spring would tell.

Why would a man focus on her garage when there was this crazed landscaping with which to judge her? Make *this* your case: no jury would convict. Why would a man focus on anything but her?

We parked in the driveway, where Robin's own car was still parked, her garage no doubt locked—even in the dark one could see the boxes stacked against the one small garage window that faced the street.

"The key's under the mat," said Isabel, though I didn't know this and wondered how she did. Pat found the key, unlocked the door, and we all went in. "Don't turn on the lights," Isabel added.

"I know," whispered Pat, though *I* didn't know.

"Why can't we turn on the lights?" I asked, also in a whisper. The door closed behind us, and we stood there in the quiet, pitch-black house.

"The police," said Pat.

"No, not the police," said Isabel.

"Then what?"

"Never mind. Just give it a minute and our eyes will adjust." We stood there listening to our own breathing. We didn't move, so as not to trip over anything.

And then, on the opposite side of the room, a small light flicked on from somewhere at the far end of the hallway; we could not see down it, but out stepped Robin, looking pretty much the same, though she had a white cotton scarf wrapped and knotted around her neck. Against the white, her teeth had a fluorescent ochre sheen, but otherwise she looked regal and appraising and she smiled at all of us, including me—though more tentatively, I thought, at me. Then she put her finger to her lips and shook her head, so we didn't speak.

"You came" were her first hushed words, directed my way. "I missed you a little at the hospital." Her smile had become clearly tight and judging.

"I am so sorry," I said.

"That's O.K., they'll tell you," she said, indicating Is and Pat. "It was a little nuts."

"It was totally nuts," said Pat.

"It was standing around watching someone die," Isabel whispered in my ear.

"As a result?" said Robin, a bit hoarsely. She cleared her throat. "No hugs. Everything's a little precarious, between the postmortem and the tubes in and out all week. This scarf's the only thing holding my head on." Though she was pale,

POLISH SLEEPERS

When they'd been block-built crisscross and four-squared
We lived with them and breathed pure creosote
Until they were laid and landscaped in a curb,
A molded verge, half skirting, half stockade,
Soon fringed with hardy ground cover and grass.
But as that bulwark bleached in sun and rain
Our gravel darkened and a tarry pus,
Imagined yet pervasive, reeked and ran
Like the breathing, bleeding bad in Dante's wood,
Unsettling, bearing forward to the garden
What I couldn't hear in the forties when I lay
Listening for what might come down the line . . .
Each deadlit, boarded, languid, clanking wagon.
And afterwards *rust, thistles, silence, sky.*

—*Seamus Heaney*

her posture was perfect, her dark-red hair restored, her long thin arms folded across her chest. She was dressed as she was always dressed: in black jeans and a blue sweater. She simply, newly, had the imperial standoffishness that I realized only then I had always associated with the dead. We pulled up chairs and each of us sat.

"Should we make some gin rickeys?" Isabel asked, motioning toward the bags of booze and lime-juice blend.

"Oh, maybe not," said Robin.

"We wanted to come here and each present you with something," said Pat.

"We did?" I said. I'd brought nothing. I had asked them what to bring and they had laughed it off.

Robin looked at me. "Always a little out of the loop, eh?" She smiled stiffly.

Pat was digging around in a hemp tote bag I hadn't noticed before. "Here's a little painting I made for you," she said, handing a small unframed canvas gingerly to Robin. I couldn't see what the painting was of. Robin stared at it for a very long time and then looked back up and at Pat and said, "Thank you so much." She momentarily laid the painting in her lap and I could see it was nothing but a plain white blank.

I looked longingly at the paper sack of gin.

"And I have a new dance for you!" whispered Isabel excitedly.

"You do?" I said.

Robin turned to me again. "Always the last to know, huh," she said, and then winced, as if speaking hurt. She clutched Pat's painting to her stomach.

Isabel stood and moved her chair out of the way. "This piece is dedicated to Robin Ross," she announced. And then, after a moment's stillness, she began to move, saying lines of poetry as she did. "Heap not on this mound / Roses that she loved so well; / Why bewilder her with roses, / That she cannot see or smell?" There was more, and as, reciting, she flew and turned and balanced on one leg, her single arm aloft, I thought, What the hell kind of poem is this? It seemed rude to speak of death to the dead, and I kept checking Robin's face, to see how she was taking it, but Robin remained impassive. At the end, she placed the painting back in her lap and clapped. I was about to clap as well, when car headlights from the driveway suddenly arced across the room.

"It's the cops! Get down!" said Isabel, and we all hit the floor.

"I think they're patrolling the house," whispered Robin, lying on her back on the rug. She was hugging Pat's painting to her chest. "I guess there was a call from a neighbor or something. Just lie here for a minute and they'll leave." The police car idled in the driveway for a minute, perhaps taking down the license number of Isabel's car, and then pulled away.

"It's O.K. We can get up now," said Robin.

"Whew. That was close," said Pat.

We all got back into our chairs, Robin with some difficulty, and there was then a long silence, like a Quaker wedding, which I came to understand was being directed at me.

"Well, I guess it's my turn," I said. "It's been a terrible month. First the election, and now this. You." I indicated Robin, and she nodded just slightly, then grabbed at her scarf and retied the knot. "And I don't have my violin or my piano here," I said. Isabel and Pat were staring at me hopelessly. "So—I guess I'll just sing." I stood up and cleared my throat. I knew that if you took "The Star-Spangled Banner" very slowly and mournfully it altered not just the attitude of the song but the actual punctuation, turning it into a protest and a question. I sang it slowly, not without a little twang. "O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave, O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?" Then I sat down. The three of them applauded, Isabel clapping her thigh.

"Very nice," said Robin. "You never sing enough," she added. Her smile to me was effortful and pinched. "Now I have to go," she said, and she stood, leaving Pat's painting behind on the chair, and walked into the lit hallway, after which we heard the light switch flick off, and the whole house was plunged into darkness again.

"Well, I'm glad we did that," I said on the way back home. I was sitting alone in the back, sneaking some of the gin—why bother ever again with the rickey mix?—and I'd been staring out the window. Now I looked forward and noticed that Pat was driving. Pat hadn't driven in years. A pickup truck with the bumper sticker "No Hillary No Way" roared past us, and we stared at its message as if we were staring at a swastika. Where were we living?

"Redneck," Isabel muttered at the driver.

"It's a trap, isn't it," I said.

"What is?" asked Pat.

"This place!" exclaimed Isabel. "Our work! Our houses! The college!"

"It's all a trap!" I repeated.

But we did not entirely believe it. Somewhere inside us we were joyful orphans: our lives were right, we were zooming along doing what we wanted,

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we were sometimes doing what we loved. But we were inadequate as a pit crew, for ourselves or for anyone else. "It was good to see Robin," I continued from the back. "It was really good to see her."

"That's true," said Isabel. Pat said nothing. She was coming off her manic high and driving took all she had.

"All in all, it was a good night," I said.

"A really good night," agreed Isabel.

"Good night," Robin had said the last time I'd seen her well, standing in her own doorway. She had invited me over and we were hanging out, eating her summery stir-fry, things both lonely and warm between us, when she asked about the man I was seeing, the one she had dated briefly.

"Well, I don't know," I said, a little sad. At that point I was still sitting at her table and I found myself rubbing the grain of it with one finger. "He seems now also to be seeing this other person—Daphne Kern? Do you know her? She's one of those beautician-slash-art dealers?" All the restaurants, coffee shops, and hair salons in town seemed to have suddenly gotten into hanging, showing, and selling art. This dignified, or artified, the business of serving. Did I feel I was better, more interesting, with my piano and my violin and my singing?

"I know Daphne. I took a yoga class once from her, when she was doing that."

"You did?" I could not control myself. "So what's so compelling about her?" My voice was not successfully shy of a whine. "Is she nice?"

"She's pretty, she's nice, she's intuitive," Robin said, casually ticking off the qualities. "She's actually a talented yoga instructor. She's very physical. Even when she speaks she uses her body a lot. You know, frankly? She's probably just really good in bed."

At this my heart sickened and plummeted down my left side and into my shoe. My appetite, too, shrank to a small pebble and sat in stony reserve in the place my heart had been and to which my heart would at some point return, but not in time for dessert.

"I've made a lemon meringue pie," said Robin, getting up and clearing the dishes. She was always making pies. She would have written more plays if she had made fewer pies. "More meringue than lemon, I'm afraid."

"Oh, thank you. I'm just full," I said, looking down at my unfinished food.

"I'm sorry," Robin said, a hint of worry in her voice. "Should I not have said that thing about Daphne?"

"Oh, no," I said. "That's fine. It's nothing." But soon I felt it was time for me to go, and after a single cup of tea I stood, clearing only a few of the dishes with her. I found my purse and headed for the door.

She stood in the doorway, holding the uneaten meringue pie. "That skirt, by the way, is great," she said in the June night. "Orange is a good color on you. Orange and gold."

"Thanks," I said.

Then, without warning, she suddenly lifted up the pie and pushed it into her own face. When she pulled off the tin, meringue clung to her skin like blown snow. The foam of it covered her lashes and brows and, with her red hair, for a minute she looked like a demented Queen Elizabeth.

"What the *fuck*?" I said, shaking my head. I needed new friends. I would go to more conferences and meet more people.

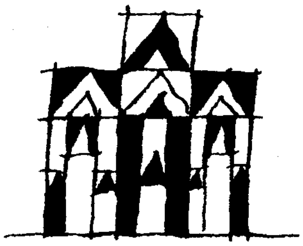
"I've always wanted to do that," said Robin. The mask of meringue on her face looked eerie, not clownish at all, and her mouth speaking through the white foam seemed to be a separate creature entirely, a puppet or a fish. "I've always wanted to do that, and now I have."

"Hey," I said. "There's no business like show business." I was digging in my purse for my car keys.

Long hair flying over her head, bits of meringue dropping on the porch, she took a dramatic bow. "Everything," she added, from behind her mask, "everything, everything, well, almost everything about it"—she gulped a little pie that had fallen in from one corner of her mouth—"is appealing."

"Brava," I said, smiling. I had found my keys. "Now I'm out of here."

"Of course," she said, gesturing with her one pie-free hand. "Onward." ♦



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THE CRITICS

BOOKS

RENAISSANCE MAN

The life of Leonardo.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

When I was a teen-ager, I wrote a science-fiction story about Leonardo da Vinci. In it, a young art historian becomes fascinated with Leonardo's otherworldly paintings, with their strange rocky backgrounds, unplaceable landscapes, and enigmatic not-quite-human saints, their single fingers forever pointing strangely upward. To make a long, and rather shamelessly Rod Serlingish, story short, the art historian eventually discovers, in a previously unknown codex, that Leonardo *was* an alien, that the rocks were the landscape of his native planet, and that the fingers were pointing longingly back home.

Sensing, sadly but with characteristic prescience, that the market in occult stories involving strange codes hidden in Leonardo's works was essentially nil, I left the story unfinished; just recently, a new pair of Leonardo books brought it to mind. The basic notion—that Leonardo is so weird that he might as well be from another planet—turns out to be hardy enough to have survived even a century of scholarship aimed at replacing romantic, otherworldly Leonardo with historical Leonardo, a man of his time. Most one-of-a-kind artists turn out, after study, to be, in another sense, merely one of a kind. William Blake, if not exactly normal, was, after Robert Rosenblum placed him with his friends Fuseli and Flaxman, more obviously part of a group, one of many line-loving, mystical neoclassicists. Bosch may still look strange to us, but, now that art historians have explained that some of his Spanish patrons thought his nightmares were funny, or even pious, we at least understand how they were originally received.

Leonardo remains weird, matchlessly weird, and nothing to be done about it. He put wings on pet lizards and called them dragons; scribbled pyramidal parachutes in the margins of manuscripts which, more than five hundred years later, turn out to work perfectly; dashed off a letter to the Ottoman sultan offering to design a bridge that would span the Golden Horn (and the bridge he sketched, built elsewhere a few years ago, in a scaled-down version, not only is perfectly engineered but anticipates the look of Eero Saarinen's T.W.A. terminal). He drew the Deluge, imagined the modern mortar, and fixed a half smile in the world's imagination, and there was no one else around doing anything like it. This keeps him a cult figure; a new series of books promises to teach you "How to Think Like Leonardo"—though, given that what his style of thinking got him was the inability to finish almost a single piece of work, learning how not to think like him might be more useful—and, of course, there is the Leonardo whose code is at the center of the best-selling thriller.

Two new and serious studies attempt the work of making Leonardo earthbound again. "Leonardo" (Oxford; $26), by the Oxford art-history professor Martin Kemp, is a summary of a life's research; "Leonardo da Vinci: Flights of the Mind" (Viking; $32.95), by the biographer and historian Charles Nicholl, is a popular account, dense with social history and rational, high-hearted speculation. The simultaneous appearance of the books doubtless created two anxious publishers, but they complement each other almost perfectly: Kemp's is Leonardo seen from the inside out, Nicholl's from the outside in. Kemp explains Leonardo's principles of design and his theory of the world from an intense knowledge of his mind and drawings; Nicholl shows where his ideas came from and who paid to subsidize them, through a broad rendering of his life and times.

Kemp's book is less a proper biography—he offers no extended account of Leonardo's illegitimate birth to a peasant's daughter, his apprenticeship in Florence to the sculptor Verrocchio, or his subsequent lifelong wanderings in the courts of Milan and France—than a series of intense, learned meditations on Leonardesque themes. Setting aside the wow! factor of Leonardo's discoveries and anticipations, Kemp tries to define what Leonardo thought he was doing, and why. He argues, convincingly, that Leonardo was constantly searching for a universal system of proportion—not merely a system of aesthetic proportion, like the famous Golden Mean, but a system of proportion that would explain, as Newton's inverse-square rule of gravity did, two centuries later, the fundamental workings of forces. "Leonardo was the first to tie the artist's notion of proportional beauty into the wider setting of the proportional action of all the powers of nature," Kemp writes. Leonardo accepted the Aristotelian theory that all motion begins with an impetus. (The fact that, as Galileo and Newton showed, objects would go on moving forever if something didn't stop them remains counter-intuitive, even today.) But Leonardo swiftly saw that the theory must be wrong: things didn't go far enough fast enough. He never resolved this problem, Kemp thinks, because he didn't have the math for it, but he never stopped searching for a resolution.

His thought processes in this search were, crucially, visual, not mathematical. He had the gift, quite distinct from numeric reasoning, of seeing abstract form;

The notion that Leonardo was so weird that he could be from another planet has survived a century of scholarship.

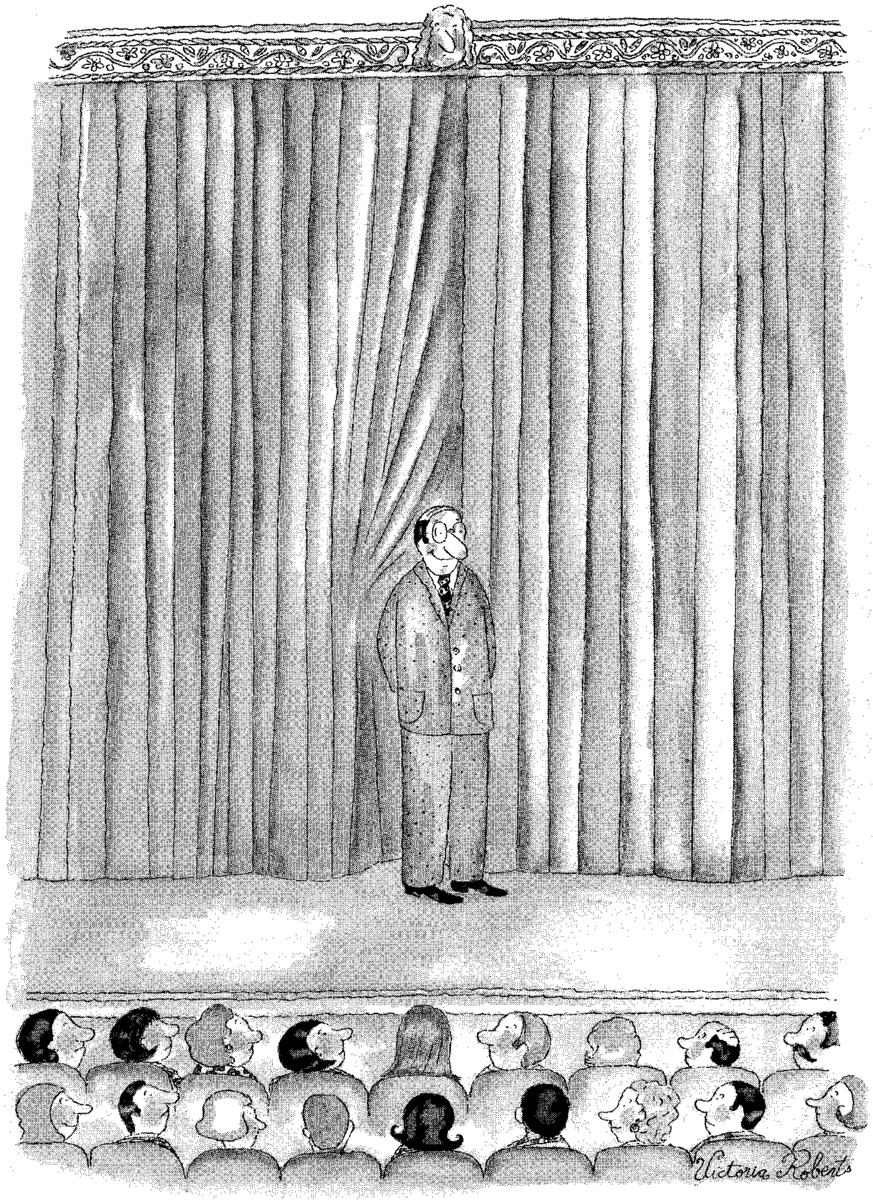
JOOST SWARTE

he would have aced the sections on standardized tests asking the student to make a mental rotation of a cube or a tetrahedron. His imagination was geometric in the sense that he thought that a small vocabulary of recurring shapes was produced whenever an impetus—the force that drives water forward in a deluge, that drives the arrow from the crossbow—was deflected by the natural fields of air and earth and water.

This constant search for basic, rhyming, organic form meant that when he looked at a heart blossoming into its network of veins he saw, and sketched alongside it, a seed germinating into shoots; studying the curls on a beautiful woman's head he thought in terms of the swirling motion of a turbulent flow of water ("Note the motion of the surface of water, which conforms to that of the hair," he wrote, in his looking-glass script); and, studying the swirling tendrils of a sea anemone, he turns them into something as dressed up and willed as a fashionable woman's hairdo. He even doodled churches that resembled the forms of shells and flowers. (If he seems to anticipate any modern science, it is D'Arcy Thompson's discovery of basic algorithms of biological structure in "On Growth and Form.")

From these almost mystical revelations, one turns with a certain happiness to Nicholl's more worldly narrative. His life of Leonardo is fresh, detailed, vivid, and presents perhaps the most fully human Leonardo we have; the book is filled with fine brief accessory lives and neat, two-paragraph evocations of complicated bits of social history. (His account of the studio system in Florence in the late Quattrocento, in which Leonardo came of age, includes the lovely and easily overlooked detail that the use of egg tempera for fresco painting meant that the artist's studio was steadily occupied by chickens.)

Nicholl follows Leonardo's mostly lucky life, as he moves from his first major public commissions in Florence in the fourteen-eighties to ducal patronage in Milan around the turn of the century, and to his eventual destiny (and death, in 1519) as a man with that luckiest of all things a villa in the Loire Valley of France. This journey north is broken up by occasional stops back in Florence, in Rome (where he influenced the young Raphael), briefly in Venice (where he may have influenced the young Giorgione), and elsewhere in Italy. Leonardo's life was amazingly well observed, in part because everyone around him sensed, from the beginning, that there was something worth observing. In addition to the usual legal and business documents—one making a criminal accusation of sodomy against him, a set detailing a twenty-year squabble about the payment for his "Madonna of the Rocks"—there were at least two full-fledged biographies written in his lifetime or soon afterward. (Vasari, who wrote his life as he wrote the lives of many others, was in awe of him, though that didn't keep him from painting over Leonardo's one unfinished fresco in Florence.) Everyone watched him. There was a monk on hand to make notes as he painted "The Last Supper," in Milan, recording with wonder that Leonardo would sometimes show up, stare at his own painting, and then walk away again, finished for the day. (Benvenuto Cellini, the Florentine sculptor, quotes the King of France saying that Leonardo was the most interesting man he had ever spoken to.)



"Is there a dramaturge in the house?"

Nicholl makes Leonardo not less strange, perhaps, but surprisingly more appealing and well rounded—not a spaceman but an artistic type whose lineaments one recognizes: the artist as self-sufficient man, with a strong, private sense of ironic humor, affectionate but not much engaged with his family and lovers, devoted to the realization of his images, surrounded by a court of helpers and hangers-on whom he watches with detached amusement—and able, above all, to play a sequence of patrons like a xylophone. We see Leonardo joking with his bosses (he remarks dryly that if he can't find a face evil enough for Judas in "The Last Supper" he'll be forced to use that of the prior in the abbey where he's painting), recording with exasperation the petty thefts of his beloved, hunky apprentice Salai, and fending off patrons with transparently false promises of work to come. He is the first artist since antiquity to put aside the tone of anxious flunkydom and set the patrons out to pursue *him*. There's a funny series of letters, which Nicholl reproduces in full, between Isabella d'Este, the ruler of Mantua, and a clerical intermediary, asking if Leonardo might possibly do something for her, which Leonardo met with polite, wouldn't-it-be-nice-someday deferral. He kept his own pictures—including the "Mona Lisa" and the "Virgin and Child with St. Anne"—with him throughout his life, working on them sporadically and then dropping them for years.

A strong sense filters through Nicholl's book, and through Kemp's as well, that though Leonardo loved painting he hated being thought of as a painter, an artisan for hire. He almost never mentions any of his great contemporaries in his notebooks except to disparage them—Botticelli makes Annunciations that look as if the angel were trying to rape the Virgin, Michelangelo's figures are sacks of nuts. The people whose names do figure are writers and philosophers and geometers, just as, to use a homely parallel, Charlie Chaplin's autobiography mentions countless novelists and scarcely another silent comedian.

Leonardo presented himself, and was accepted, as an engineer above all. The contempt that he showed for painters was made up for by the respect that he showed architects and engineers: Alberti, Brunelleschi, Bramante. He sketched building plans inspired by organic forms like those of blossoms or buds. (Nothing got built, and it didn't matter, since Bramante's Leonardesque churches did.) He was always going somewhere to consult on fortifications, or rerouting a river, or reinstalling the foundations of a church. (It isn't clear that he was actually any good at this; like Buckminster Fuller, he was ahead not only of his time but of his tools.)

And then Leonardo, as is the way with engineers, liked power, and worked complacently for tyrants and monsters. His journey north was a tropism toward the nascent absolute monarchies. He had a definite Wernher von Braun side: he actively sought out the patronage of Ludovico Sforza, the Duke of Milan and the worst man in Italy—the art historian Frederick Hartt, a Florentine-republic patriot, made it sound almost like going behind the Iron Curtain—and had equable dealings with Cesare Borgia at the very moment when Machiavelli was studying him as a model of amoral ruthlessness. (There is a fine, funny play to be written about the moment when Machiavelli, Cesare Borgia, and Leonardo were all stuck in the same castle during a siege.) He became the first in a long line of French court favorites who were expected only to *be*, beautifully. He much preferred the patronage of monarchs—who could be flattered by a few tricks, bought off with a great pageant or a cool theatrical illusion—to that of the Florentine republic or the Church fathers, who were always pestering you for the finished picture or quarrelling because you didn't fulfill the contract.

Kenneth Clark, who remains the best commentator on Leonardo, wrote years ago that Leonardo's great artistic gift was for making emblematic images from observed life, hieroglyphic symbols that have the haunting quality of the real, constantly renegotiating the line "between science and symbolism." Leonardo's most "documentary" drawings, like the famous cross-section of the child wrapped in its mother's womb, are largely imaginary: he never dissected a pregnant woman, and, anyway, the uterus he drew showed the multiple placenta of a cow. When he turned his mind fully to an image, it nearly always was both mythic and momentary. The "Mona Lisa," of course, is the most famous of these double images, ageless femme fatale and Florentine merchant's wife. But the gift, uncannily, is visible in everything he does.

The famous figure of Vitruvian man, for instance, splayed out in his encircled square, is in origin a derivative illustration of an antique idea about regular proportions: a man's proportions when the arms are horizontal make a square; with the arms diagonal they center a circle. Though it is possible to see this as a "humanist" ideal, it is not necessarily so; it says not that man's proportions are divine but merely that they are regular. The point of the image is not that man is the measure of all things; it is that man can, like all things, be measured. But the tension between this abstract and diminishing idea and its realization as a strange, aged, specific figure, with a strong, unostentatious but perfect body and a grave, unforgettable face—half Don Imus, half St. Jerome; Nicholl suggests that it is a self-portrait—gives the image a certain heroism, as though the individual had stoically lent himself for a scientific trial.

Or take the image of a nutcracker-jawed old man confronting a beautiful youth, which turns up in the margins and center of the notebooks. It is clearly a doodle, unattached to observation, a basic symbolic type like the birds in the margins of medieval manuscripts. Yet when the beautiful young Salai enters Leonardo's life, looking like a cross between Rupert Everett and Marlon Brando, the hieroglyph suddenly comes to life as a diary image, "Death in Venice" in mordant visual shorthand. (Both Kemp and Nicholl take on the issue of Leonardo's homosexuality and conclude that he obviously was and that in some less obvious ways was not; he almost got thrown in prison for sodomy, but there is some evidence of female connections, too.)

Although Freud's famous analysis of Leonardo's character—a man turned

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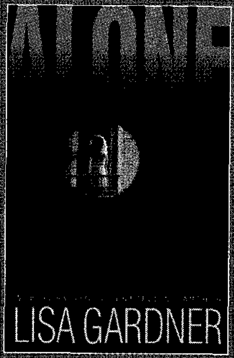

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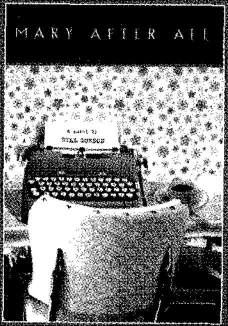

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homosexual by absent father and not one but two overbearing mothers (natural and adoptive)—has long been brushed aside as a tour de force of shrewd reasoning from bad evidence, one detail in it seems exactly right: Leonardo did have an obsession with women, in pairs particularly. Which leads, irresistibly, to that best-seller, with its case for Leonardo as the secret refounder of the old religion of the Goddess through his veneration of Mary Magdalene (whom he supposedly paints disguised as St. John in "The Last Supper").

The first thing to be said about Dan Brown's "Da Vinci Code" is that "da Vinci" is not a name; no one in Leonardo's lifetime would ever have called him "da Vinci" (it just means "from Vinci," his birthplace) or anything like it. But Brown is shaky on names throughout: a key cryptogram in his cryptogram-filled book depends on decoding the original meaning of "Mona Lisa"—a name that nobody used for the picture until well into the nineteenth century. The next thing to be said is that the book depends on a story, or backstory, pulled more or less in one piece from the 1982 occult best-seller "Holy Blood, Holy Grail." And the most significant thing is that "The Da Vinci Code" is plain burn-at-the-stake blasphemous: its entire point is that Christianity as it is understood is a fraud put over by Constantine, and that Jesus, far from being divine, is a human being who fathered children. (The murder mystery rests on the premise that the Catholic Church, through the Opus Dei, sends out hit men to kill the people who know the truth.) A cultural anthropologist, a hundred years from now, will doubtless find, in the unprecedented success of "The Da Vinci Code" during the time of a supposed religious revival, some clear sign that, in the Elvis mode, what a lot of Americans mean by spirituality is simply an immense openness to occult superstitions of all kinds.

Yet the book gains its occult authority from having Leonardo in its machinery. Should we struggle to rescue Leonardo from this Nostradamus fate—as Clark writes, even his contemporaries came to see him "less as an artist and more as an old magician whose mind was stocked with terrible secrets about the universe"—and save him for science and modernity? The question is big and hard. How much of the High Renaissance he defined was an usher to the scientific revolution, helping it to its seat, and how much was the last efflorescence of a world view still religious and analogical, on the other side of the great divide?

Is Leonardo a scientist? We would like to make him one of ours, and are encouraged because through the years we have grown accustomed to the thought that scientists are in significant ways like artists: they imagine and observe and leap to hypotheses as poets leap to metaphors. They see beyond the thing at hand to the mysterious relation it may have to another thing at hand—when an apple drops on their head, they ask what dark, occult force in the earth drew it there. And yet, reading these new lives of Leonardo, one begins to think that scientists are not so very much like artists, and Leonardo least of all. He *was* a magus, and remains firmly on the far side of the scientific revolution. As Lisa Jardine's fine life of Robert Hooke reminded us recently, the real scientific revolution consisted of a willingness to measure once and measure again and then measure yet again. Doggedness, drudgery, and dutifulness—the three "D"s of Protestantism—are at its heart, and those Leonardo never knew. He still thought by lunges and in metaphors. Things are understood by being shown to be like other things: the uterus is like a cosmos, the blood like rivers, the world is a microcosm.

It is a curious thing to say about so gifted an observer, but Leonardo is not in our sense an empiricist at all: he is looking for vital form and analogy, and does not quite go where his eye will lead him. Although he does experiments, and understands them, he does not do them much, or value them more than congruences. He could think microscopically and macroscopically, make amazing horizontal connections and see in a wide vertical range. His list of types of water in motion is Whitman-like: "Rebound, circulation, revolution, rotating, turning, repercussing, submerging, surging . . ." Yet his fellow-Tuscan Galileo's more potent urge, at the turn of the century, to drop a wooden ball and a cannonball from a high place and see which got down first is not an urge he knew.

It's even tempting to entertain the thought that, had Leonardo's work been lost, we would not recognize the loss from the world around it, would not sense a missing planet from its perturbations of other orbits. As A. Richard Turner showed, in "Inventing Leonardo," much of Leonardo's actual work wasn't even available for centuries, and one is almost inclined to say that Leonardo really left nothing to the formal inheritance of art. Apart from "The Last Supper"—admittedly, a very big apart—little of his work circulated in prints and copies. It is possible that his brief stay in Venice may have influenced the art of Giorgione toward "opticality" and dense atmospheric perspective—but the Venetians were on the way there anyway, and might have arrived from more mundane, Northern models. Without Raphael and Michelangelo, three centuries of pictures and objects are literally unimaginable: their images and symbols became a tonic note for everything afterward, and that isn't true of the mysterious third spirit in the Renaissance trinity.

And yet to say this is to overlook the most obvious thing about him, which is Leonardo's being Leonardo. From the first instance of Leonardo on record, there is a sense that we were dealing with someone fundamentally different from anyone that had come before, doing a kind of work that had no real precedents—something that arose from the artisanal life of the Florentine artist-for-hire but overwhelmed it with independent vision and autonomous standards, something that was, finally, so conceptual and self-enclosed that it carried engineering and architecture practice to a peak of self-involved fantasy. In the end, all even a king could do was buy him a house and admire him. His life's work was to turn his contemporaries' idea of the artist from artisan to genius, from working stiff to saint and shaman and magician and necromancer—and, for that matter, rich man's ornament. The Great Elevation from the artisanal, which still fuels our idea of art, finds its starting point, and almost its summit, in him. The romantic, otherworldly Leonardo may be the most historical Leonardo of them all. ♦

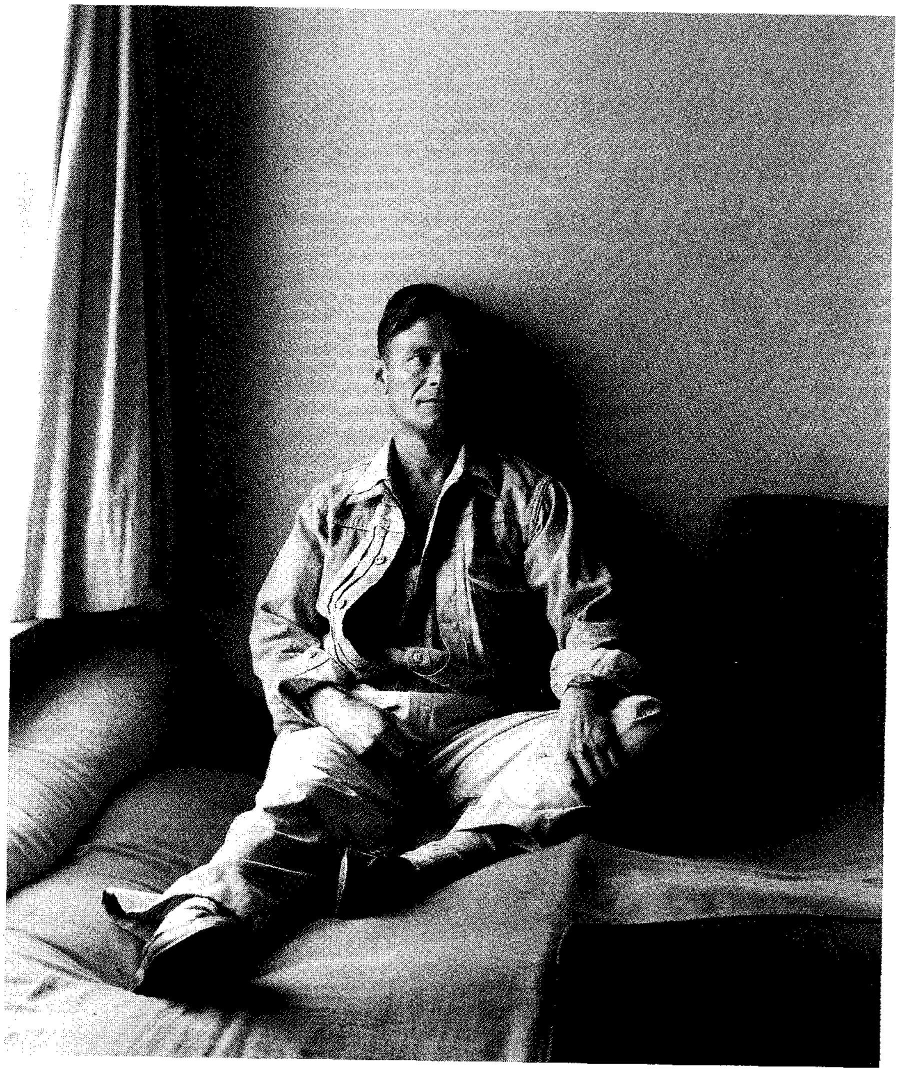
BOOKS

I, ME, MINE

A new biography of Christopher Isherwood.

BY HILTON ALS

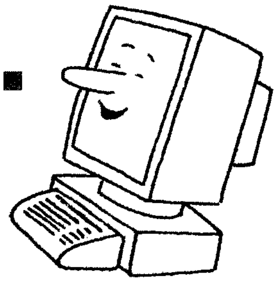
Herr Issyvoo. The name sounds like a kiss followed by a sigh. At least, that's the way it's pronounced—with reverence, with love—in the gay quarters of Berlin, where the English writer Christopher Isherwood (1904-86), who lived there, off and on, between 1929 and 1933, became a figure in the demimonde. Of course, those five years continue to color the emotional climate of a city where one can still see the traces of the disaster that followed—the bullet marks and shrapnel lodged in the sides of gray marble office buildings—and where the most discussed cultural event of the season is "Der Untergang" ("The Downfall"), a film detailing Hitler's last days in the bunker. Isherwood's writing about Berlin—"Mr. Norris Changes Trains" (1935), "Sally Bowles" (1937), and "Goodbye to Berlin" (1939)—is his best-known work, and it's not hard to imagine him delighting in recording certain aspects of the present-day city (its openly gay mayor; the chic scruffiness of Prenzlauer Berg, an area of the former East Berlin that was unknown to Westerners until the Wall came down). But, as Peter Parker implies in his major—and healthily skeptical—biography, "Isherwood: A Life Revealed" (Random House; $39.95), none of this would have mattered much to Isherwood except as a reflective surface on which his own fairly fixed desires and anxieties could play. Isherwood was a prolific novelist, memoirist, journalist, and dramatist—he published thirty-three books and wrote a number of screenplays and works for the theatre. But, for a novelist, he didn't especially care about invention. He cared about "Christopher Isherwood," the alter ego that he created both for his fiction and for his nonfiction.

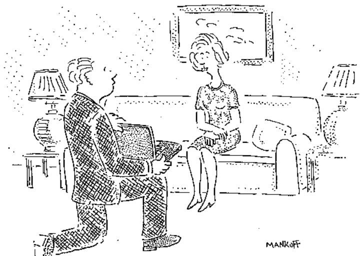


"Christopher Isherwood" was an apparatus behind which the author took refuge.

GEORGE PLATT LYNES/KINSEY INSTITUTE

"Isherwood" was the apparatus behind which the author took refuge. "I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking," he wrote, famously, at the beginning of "Goodbye to Berlin." "Recording the man shaving at the window opposite and the woman in the kimono washing her hair. Some day, all this will have to be developed, carefully printed, fixed." Isherwood's best critics, Gore Vidal and Elizabeth Hardwick, have characterized his work as journalistic and objective, and indeed his writing can be read as a series of dispatches from the gay front. But he was prone to self-dramatization. Here, from "Christopher and His Kind," a highly entertaining and erotically charged memoir published when he was in his seventies, is a description of his only sexual encounter with a woman: "She was five or six years older than [Christopher], easygoing, stylish, humorous. . . . He was surprised and amused to find how easily he could relate his usual holds and movements to this unusual partner. He felt curiosity and the fun of playing a new game. He also felt a lust which was largely narcissistic." Unlike Virginia Woolf, who grappled with her sexuality behind the fluttering curtain of her sensibility, or E. M. Forster, who used the exoticism of far-off places and customs as a stand-in for homoeroticism, Isherwood saw that gayness *was* his sensibility. He was essentially ironic and suspicious when it came to the world inhabited by what he called "The Others"—heterosexuals and anyone else he saw as representative of the status quo. His compunction to tell the truth, at least with respect to whom he





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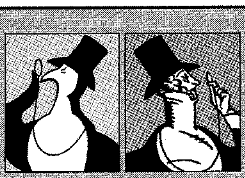

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bedded and wanted to bed, did not necessarily make him a great artist. He was too short on metaphor and too long on faggy candor—the sly turn of phrase, a nasty view of women—to achieve what W. H. Auden, his close friend and associate of many years, accomplished in his work: a universal approach to and acceptance of people as they are, or hope to be.

The biographer of a copious self-chronicler has a particular burden: the feeling that he might be serving up leftovers. Parker, who in 1989 published an excellent biography of the English novelist and memoirist J. R. Ackerley, avoids this problem by providing careful, fresh readings of Isherwood's published works and his unpublished diaries, and conducting numerous interviews with his friends and contemporaries. He is undoubtedly a more reliable narrator than Isherwood, and is never shy about expressing his frustration with his subject's delusions and selective memory. "I was an upper-middle-class Puritan, cautious, a bit stingy, with a stake in the land," Isherwood wrote of himself in "Lions and Shadows" (1938), a memoir of his two years at Cambridge, in which, Parker points out, he scarcely mentions his family. A later memoir about his parents, "Kathleen and Frank" (1971), Parker finds self-serving and inaccurate. "Isherwood's tardy interest in his family was largely solipsistic," Parker writes pointedly. "His antecedents were interesting insofar as Christopher Isherwood was the end result. His approach to them was archaeological rather than strictly genealogical, discovering his family within himself. Consequently, generations of respectable forebears are ignored and only those whose characters seemed in some way to have contributed to Isherwood's own personal mythology make their appearances."

Christopher William Bradshaw-Isherwood was born in Cheshire, near the large estate of Marple Hall, where his father had been reared. Frank had a gentleman's career in the military. Kathleen, the daughter of a wine merchant, was an inveterate diary keeper, a habit that her son developed early in life. (She prodded him to write: when he was six or seven, she helped him assemble "The History of My Friends.") When Isherwood was seven, his brother Richard was born. Diagnosed as "backward," Richard had a masochistic zeal for the punishments that his older brother inflicted upon him, and this pattern of dominance persisted throughout Isherwood's life. But if he could be cruel he was also a wit. "I think God must have been very tired when He made this country," Auden recalled the ten-year-old Isherwood saying as they walked across the downs at St. Edmund's, the preparatory school in Surrey where they met.

The following year, 1915, Frank Isherwood was killed in the trenches at Ypres, and Kathleen set about memorializing him. She never remarried, and sorrow became the preëminent sentiment of the house, a stifling shroud that she cast over her children. After St. Edmund's, Isherwood followed the educational trajectory expected of his social class. At Repton, a public school, he developed a strong interest in journal-writing and boys (the younger and blonder the better; he had an eye for shapely ankles), which eventually overshadowed his interest in literature. While still young, Isherwood and his close friend the sympathetic heterosexual novelist Edward Upward deemed Shakespeare's reputation to be entirely overblown. It was not until Upward read "Hamlet," while he and Isherwood were at Cambridge, and passed it along to his chum that Isherwood conceded that there might be something to the Bard.

Isherwood's lack of intellectual curiosity was not just a matter of shallowness. As Parker makes clear, it was a way of repudiating his mother (who loved English literature) and all women of a similar class and background who worshipped dead war heroes and classic authors. "For Isherwood 'the Past' and 'my Mother' were almost the same thing," Parker writes. "For Kathleen Isherwood, the past represented a place to which she could escape, the place where she had been most happy; for Christopher Isherwood, the past was a treacherous bog into which you could be sucked down and suffocated." Parker shows Isherwood's distaste for Kathleen and all that she stood for (England itself) as the author's primary source of inspiration—the thing against which he defined himself. Isherwood felt he had his reasons: "It was easy for these impressive adults to make a suggestible little boy feel guilty," he wrote of his father's death, in "Kathleen and Frank." "Yet he soon started to react against his guilt. Timidly and secretly at first, but with passion, with a rage against The Others which possessed him to the marrow of his bones, he rejected their Hero-Father. Such a rejection leads to a much larger one. By denying your duty toward the Hero-Father, you deny the authority of the Flag, the Old School Tie, the Unknown Soldier, the Land That Bore You and the God of Battles."

Kathleen, who had hoped that her son would be a doctor or a don, was commendably tolerant of his chosen career, under the circumstances. When he gave her a copy of the typescript of his novel "All the Conspirators" (which was the first of his novels to be published, in 1928, and contains a harsh portrait of her as a maudlin grieving widow), Kathleen's reaction was preternaturally mild. "I don't like the tone as well as 'Lions & Shadows,' " she wrote in her diary, referring to one of Isherwood's early fictional attempts, now lost. (He recycled the title for his Cambridge memoir.) "Much more sexual & vindictive but it is a very interesting, clever study of a family we know! The end too is good." Another time, when Isherwood told Kathleen that he had handed over a work of his to Upward for a critique, she proudly reported on the novelist's praise: Upward "thinks it very good, much the best thing he has done—I am so glad—(C. thinks so much of his opinion)." She was also remarkably tolerant of his relationships with men. Meanwhile, Isherwood did his best to alienate her. At twenty-one, he signed his rights to Marple Hall over to Frank's brother Henry, who was married but nevertheless liked to regale his nephew with stories of his sexual adventures among guardsmen. Until 1941, when the estate went to Richard after Henry's death, Kathleen was deprived of the connection to her husband's birthplace, not to mention a nice house in which to grow old.

In the mid-twenties, Isherwood and Auden, who had met again through friends when Auden was still an undergraduate at Oxford, became lovers—Auden, brilliant and awkward, was Isherwood's junior by two and a half years, and thus an acceptable mate. It's not surprising that the sexual element of the relationship—an element that lasted roughly a decade—seemed to matter more to Auden than to Isherwood. Isherwood was, at heart, a fetishist; anyone's body would do as long as it conformed to the body (and age) in his mind. Auden, on the other hand, was a romantic. "The marriage of true minds. Between two collaborators, whatever their sex, age, or appearance, there is always an erotic bond," he wrote in a journal in the nineteen-sixties. "Queers, to whom normal marriage and parenthood are forbidden, are fools if they do not deliberately look for tasks which require collaboration, and the right person with whom to collaborate." (He and Isherwood later wrote several plays together, as well as "Journey to a War," an eccentric compilation of prose, poetry, and reportage on the Chinese-Japanese wars of the nineteen-thirties, which was published in 1938.)

Auden first went to Berlin in the summer of 1928, and the following spring Isherwood—after a brief but unsuccessful stint in medical school—joined him. Like a number of his near-contemporaries—Stephen Spender, John Layard, John Lehmann, and the like—Isherwood found that the place not only condoned but encouraged sexual experimentation of all sorts. The love affairs he had during his first years in Berlin all blur together, like too many blonds at a party. (He puts it best: "To Christopher, Berlin meant Boys.") It was the end of Weimar, when to be low-down was a high-class choice. In Berlin, the laws against Isherwood and company's sexual predilections were much easier to defy than in England, and one could purchase the favors of *Puppenjungen*—"doll boys." In the main, the boys Isherwood was attracted to were working class, with girlfriends whom they supported on the allowances they got from older men. For those boys, having sex with men was not nearly as strenuous as trying to find work in a place that was on the verge of economic collapse.

Throughout his life, Isherwood preferred the kind of sex he experienced as a boy in public school: a bit of horsing around before the Act, followed by a kind of moony romanticism, particularly if the loved one could not be had for

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JF

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a second or third bout of wrestling. Parker reminds us that Isherwood once wrote that he "couldn't relax sexually with a member of his own class or nation." By acquiring lovers who did not speak his language and often relied on him financially, Isherwood assured himself of a certain power and of a constant audience. He needed both in order to be sexually interested in anyone. "All boys are sharks," Isherwood once said. "It is only a question how well or gracefully they cadge." I am a camera, indeed. But were the images that Isherwood took—in and out of bed—with his famous eye all ultimately self-referential?

In Berlin, Isherwood met many of the characters that would populate his Berlin stories. In the sharp and amusing "Mr. Norris," narrated by an Isherwood proxy—named William Bradshaw, after Isherwood's own full name—Isherwood deftly distills, in the character of the bewigged bounder Arthur Norris, the essence of English peevishness. "By the time we had reached Bentheim," Bradshaw, who meets Norris on a train from Holland to Berlin, tells us, "Mr. Norris had delivered a lecture on the disadvantages of most of the chief European cities. . . . He had suffered from rheumatics in Stockholm and draughts in Kaunas; in Riga he had been bored, in Warsaw treated with extreme discourtesy, in Belgrade he had been unable to obtain his favourite brand of tooth-paste. In Rome he had been annoyed by insects, in Madrid by beggars, in Marseille by taxi-horns." Norris, like many of Isherwood's expats in Berlin, is a colonial with a certain distaste for the foreigners whose land he has invaded. He is also gay, a fact that Isherwood, daringly, made little effort to disguise.

"All the Conspirators" had been dismissed as callow, and "The Memorial" (1932) had been respectably reviewed but hadn't sold, and for years Isherwood had made a show of scratching out a living by translating and reviewing (it was his inheritance, administered by Kathleen, that kept him in schnitzel). With "Mr. Norris," he experienced his first popular success. The *Daily Telegraph* called Arthur Norris "one of the most delightful persons one has met in fiction for a long time, and absolutely real." More important, the book sold well.

Next came "Sally Bowles," and recognition from literary London. Cyril Connolly compared Isherwood to George Orwell, calling them "the ablest exponents of the colloquial style among the young writers." "Sally Bowles," a series of episodic vignettes that were also included in the later book "Goodbye to Berlin" (and ultimately became the basis for "Cabaret"), was drawn from the life of an Englishwoman whom Isherwood knew in Germany. The interlocking stories tell of an aspiring actress and mediocre night-club singer at the Lady Windermere, who lives on handouts from lovers and friends. Bowles is a feckless bohemian, and a performer who needs no stage: she's perfectly happy to display her eccentricities in the sitting room of her "darling Chris."

By the time Isherwood decided to immigrate to America with Auden in 1939—thereby, as he put it, separating himself "from Mother and Motherland at one stroke"—he was fairly well known. He did not have Auden's stature, but the two were nevertheless often paired. They symbolized a new political consciousness (both toyed with Communism), and expressed an active dislike of their country's class system and its hypocritical attitudes toward sex. When they decided to go to America, they became tabloid figures, betrayers of hearth and home. To the young intellectuals who admired their boldness, they became heroes. What duty did Auden and Isherwood have toward a country that didn't accept them? By leaving home, they were, in some respect, giving up their schoolboy dreams of belonging.

The two first settled in New York, and Auden took to it right away. Isherwood didn't. Parker recounts a PEN Club dinner at the Algonquin Hotel, not long after their arrival, at which Isherwood embarrassed himself by making an obnoxious speech and Auden read his monumental new poem "In Memory of W. B. Yeats." Isherwood felt overshadowed by Auden's productivity and fame. "It is a little as if we've exchanged places," he noted bitterly in his diary.

Los Angeles soon became the golden pool that the rapidly aging Narcissus found most congenial. At the age of forty-eight, he met the artist Don Bachardy, who was only eighteen, and who remained his companion for the rest of his life. He befriended Aldous Huxley and Igor Stravinsky, and played the gossipy godfather to other artists who celebrated young boys, such as David Hockney. For money, he worked on movie scripts—"The Sailor from Gibraltar," "Diane," "Frankenstein."

Almost immediately on arrival, Isherwood began to seek out a spiritual teacher, and soon attached himself to Swami Prabhavananda. With his guru, he tried to eliminate the ego—an impulse that, for a writer who was so self-involved, signalled an artistic crisis. Indeed, his writing, made muscular and quick in the fight against the oppressive forces of his upbringing, slackened in the tolerant air of California, where he devoted more and more time to translating Hindu texts.

His last good novel, "A Single Man," was published in 1964. The protagonist, an Englishman named George, lives in Los Angeles and, at the novel's start, is grieving over the death of his lover, Jim. George's loneliness magnifies his priggishness—"a finicky, faggoty interest in the looks of things," as Hardwick put it in her review. Written in the present tense ("George feels a bowel movement coming on with agreeable urgency and climbs the stairs briskly to the bathroom book in hand"), the tightly circumscribed novel is intensely dramatic. With "A Single Man," Isherwood became a spokesman for "out" literature. Soon he gave up on fiction altogether, freeing himself to litter page after page with Christopher Isherwood, the only character he never grew tired of. Largely because of the indiscreet memoirs that he published during his last decade, he remained fashionable and vital and came to be regarded as the patron saint of homosexuals.

For many readers, Isherwood is familiar only as a minor character in the drama of his own making. In 1951, his friend and sometime nemesis John Van Druten adapted the "Sally Bowles" material for the stage. Starring Julie Harris as Sally Bowles, the play, "I Am a Camera," was an instant hit. Fifteen years later, it became a Broadway musical, and then the spectacular Bob Fosse movie "Cabaret." Fosse's Sally (Liza Minnelli) is a star; his Isherwood character, renamed Brian along the way, is somewhat incidental to the story. The drama is all Sally's, as it should be. ◆

BRIEFLY NOTED

Home Land, *by Sam Lipsyte (Picador; $13).* The hero of this comic novel, Lewis Miner, a.k.a. Teabag, was a high-school stoner, and now makes it his mission to write extremely candid letters to the alumni newsletter. His life, as he writes, "did not pan out." He works as a dishwasher in his father's cheesy catering business and spends his free time moping with his friend Gary, who sued his parents for molestation and then sued the shrink who conjured up these false memories. Teabag's letters detail his sexual fantasies (most of which involve the leg warmers of the school's jazz-dancing squad), his stalled ambition, and the misshapen pearls of wisdom he's garnered from his bottomed-out life. The story ends in an improbable shootout, but Lipsyte transfigures Teabag's self-loathing into a sensibility that is both hilarious and noble.

Pearl, *by Mary Gordon (Pantheon; $24.95).* After the death of a teen-age boy peripherally involved in the Troubles, Pearl Meyers, a Wesleyan student on a semester abroad in Ireland, announces that she hasn't eaten in six weeks and then chains herself to the fence at the American Embassy. Her mother, an old-fashioned New York liberal very much like the author, flies to Ireland and embarks on a campaign to save Pearl, who is in a Dublin hospital. Gordon is an exquisite chronicler of guilt and regret, and in this flawed, potent novel many of her recurrent preoccupations are on display: a complicated relationship with lust and greed, a belief in the possibility of redemption through love, and the conviction that everything can be explained, if you just listen hard enough. In a series of flashbacks, Gordon sketches in the background to Pearl's action, but her direct addresses to the reader are intrusive and turn Pearl from a character into an object lesson.

Mad Mary Lamb, *by Susan Tyler Hitchcock (Norton; $24.95).* In 1796, in a fit of insanity, Mary Lamb, aged thirty-one, murdered her mother with a carving knife. Thereafter, despite periodic spells in asylums, she played host to Coleridge and Wordsworth and was the principal author of the famous "Tales from Shakespeare," written with her better-known brother Charles. Charles was an alcoholic with a stutter and a limp who had a blistering sense of humor, and who, under the pen name Elia, artfully reinvented the personal essay. It was only a matter of time before modern biographers rediscovered the unconventional pair. Hitchcock's is the third biography of the Lambs to appear in the past couple of years, and capably rescues Mary from the footnotes of her brother's story. But this somewhat bland account fails to convey the quirkiness of the Lamb siblings, or to illuminate a literary partnership that lasted for nearly forty years.

Bugatti Queen, *by Miranda Seymour (Random House; $24.95).* In the nineteen-twenties, a French postmaster's daughter named Hélène Delangle became Hellé Nice, a race-car driver celebrated from Monaco to New Jersey. Later, after a disastrous wreck in São Paulo and uncorroborated allegations of Nazi collaboration, Hellé descended to infamy and then obscurity. Seymour, working from a trunk of papers and a couple of Hellé's old scrapbooks, has resuscitated a world replete with sleek cars, spectacular crashes, and scads of lovers. By necessity, her narrative crosses over into novelistic terrain, but, in her rendering, Hellé's life is so extraordinary that one doesn't mind. "She reached the track with half an hour to go, wishing she hadn't spent the night before dancing at Les Acasias," a typical episode begins. "A mixture of morphine, champagne, and sex had left her wanting to crawl into a coalhole when she woke up."

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From Siri Hustvedt

Author of *What I Loved*
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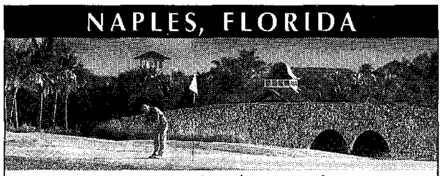

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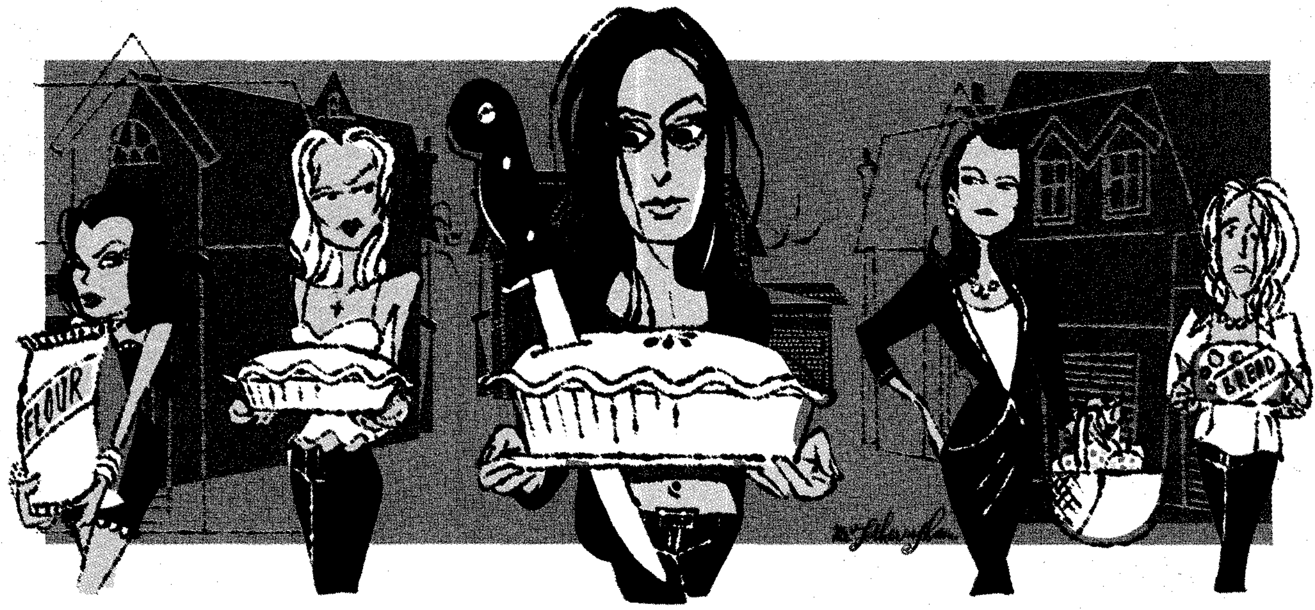
ON TELEVISION

WOMEN GONE WILD

"Desperate Housewives."

BY NANCY FRANKLIN



Who knows what evil lurks in the heart of suburbia? The stars of ABC's big new hit soap opera intend to find out.

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

America is having a torrid love affair with "Desperate Housewives," and I feel so left out. The nation is simply "Mad About 'Housewives,'" according to a *Newsweek* cover story, but not since the days of the Macarena have I felt this bewildered by a pop-culture phenomenon. Its status was ratified in November, when, in a promo for "Desperate Housewives" at the beginning of a "Monday Night Football" broadcast, Nicollette Sheridan, one of the show's stars, doffed a bath towel and jumped into the arms of a Philadelphia Eagles wide receiver. The Federal Communications Commission didn't throw a flag on ABC's play, but the prurience patrol is investigating the matter. ABC, meanwhile, is tearing up the field: the show, which is on Sunday nights at nine, regularly attracts more than twenty million viewers.

"Housewives" is a knowing, campy take on the mores of suburban life and marriage with elements of a mystery story, arising from an act of suicide at the beginning of the series, and of drama, as the show burrows a little deeper each week into the characters' lives and exposes their secrets. Set on a perfect-looking street called Wisteria Lane, on which every blade of grass seems to have been individually waxed (the street is the one that was used for the NBC series "Providence," and it recalls the sanitized-for-your-protection look of the town in "The Truman Show"), the show centers on four women who are friends but don't, it turns out, know each other that well. (Sheridan's character, Edie, lives in the neighborhood but isn't integral to the group. In the show's catalogue of stereotypes, she corresponds to Samantha in "Sex and the City"; she's the designated slut.) Teri Hatcher plays Susan, whose husband left her for his secretary; Marcia Cross, familiar to many as the psycho doctor from "Melrose Place," plays Bree, a Martha Stewart-like domestic tyrant who has made life miserable for her husband and children; Eva Longoria is a former model named Gabrielle, who is married to a rich corporate dealmaker and sleeping with their seventeen-year-old gardener; and Felicity Huffman is Lynette, a former high-powered businesswoman who has given up her career to stay home with her four children. After their neighbor Mary Alice (Brenda Strong) kills herself one morning, once she has taken care of the laundry and painted a lawn chair—"quietly polishing the routine of my life until it gleamed with perfection," she says, in a wink-wink voice-over—the friends find a threatening note addressed to her among her belongings, and they set about trying to solve the mystery of her death. At the same time, the stresses in the women's lives are played for comedy (and sometimes as an attempt to get two laughs out of one joke—in two episodes early in the series, two different characters are caught outside naked, one in her full birthday suit and one in his birthday pants). Gabrielle has to deal with the complicated logistics of sleeping with a high-school student. Reaching him one afternoon on his cell phone, she asks him where he is. "Algebra," he says. Lynette's two oldest children, six-year-old twins, are turbo terrors, and she has to resort to bribery to try to get them in line. Not only do her efforts never work; they also earn her judgmental looks from people who disapprove of her mothering techniques—looks that she throws right back at them. Susan has a teen-age daughter she treats as an equal, even to the point of enlisting her aid in hooking up with the handsome, mysterious new single guy across the street; the joke here is that her daughter is more grownup than she is.

Marc Cherry, who created "Desperate Housewives," and whose background is in sitcoms (he was a writer and producer for "The Golden Girls"), is juggling a lot of genres in this show, and some people feel that the shifting tones are part of what makes it original and compelling. But there doesn't seem to be any unifying taste at work; all the playing around with soap opera, melodrama, and comedy shows that Cherry has talent, but it doesn't prove that he has artistry. The show is both heavy-handed and lightweight, with scenes that are tediously drawn out and yet don't go anywhere, particularly the ones involving Bree and her husband, Rex, played by Steven Culp. They have grown apart and can't communicate, but some feeling about that crisis should nonetheless come across, and it doesn't; you can't believe these two people ever cared about each other, and you can't believe you will ever care about them.

Nearly every development is predictable—when a teen-ager gets behind the wheel of a car, you know an accident is sure to follow, and when Lynette takes one of her children's A.D.D. pills as a pick-me-up, you see drug dependency in her future. And some of the dialogue is rusty boilerplate. In one episode, Lynette and her husband, Tom (Doug Savant, another former resident of "Melrose Place"), are thinking out loud about Bree's troubled marriage and their disturbance at realizing that she was not as happy as they had thought she was, and, at a pregnant pause in the conversation, I said to the TV, "Are we happy?," just before Lynette said it to Tom. What's the most fun about "Housewives" is the outright comedy—that's where the show's real wit and intelligence are, not in its supposedly clever devices. The words we hear from Mary Alice in her treacly voice-over at the beginning and the end of each episode are as bromidic as wisdom gets. One episode, incredibly, begins with our being handed this chunk of fool's gold: "Suburbia is a battleground, an arena for all forms of domestic combat. Husbands clash with wives, parents cross swords with children. But the bloodiest battles often involve women and their mothers-in-law." Another episode begins, "Competition. It means different things to different people. In suburbia, it means keeping up with the Joneses." The soul may live forever, but our observations, apparently, don't become more trenchant after we die.

Lynette and Susan are the most organic characters in the show. Huffman is terrific as a mother who is both frazzled and focussed, and who chafes at the smugness of the mothers who get involved up to their elbows at her sons' school. But those women prey on her insecurities, and she starts popping pills so she can keep pace with them. "Other moms make it look so easy," she tells her friends. After she crashes, she decides it's time to take off the Suzy Homemaker mask and "score some high-grade nanny." In a hilarious scene set in a park, Lynette examines the array of nannies and finally sees a likely prospect. Sitting down on a bench, the locus of many a serendipitous romance, Lynette hits on the young woman, and woos her until she wins her hand in employment. Hatcher, too, is always engaging—she's loose-limbed, a little goofy, and believable as a recent divorcée who hasn't quite found her footing.

"Desperate Housewives," Cherry has said, came about after he realized the sacrifices his mother had made in order to have a family. (Now forty-two, he was in his late thirties when this dawned on him.) There's not much in our society that helps women who are torn between being Betty Crocker and being Betty Friedan. Lynette, who is based in part on Cherry's mother, says she feels stuck—she can't go back to her old, corporate life, and she's not thrilled about her current life. And no wonder. Mixed and retrograde messages are all around. Just look at the commercials for other TV shows during "Desperate Housewives" which are aimed at women: a promo for the latest installment of "The Bachelorette," a show that celebrates superficiality; and a promo for a new show called "Super Nanny," in which hapless mothers learn how to discipline their kids. One night, there was an ad for Visa featuring a woman with a shopping jones who lies to her husband about all her purchases. Another night, right after a scene where Bree's smooth surface cracks, painfully opening the way to possible growth, there was a commercial for an air freshener in which women gave testimonials about the way it quelled their anxiety about bathroom smells. "It's fresh, it's clean, and I'm not worried," one of them says. Well, I am. ♦

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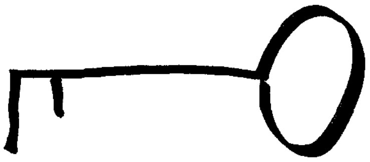

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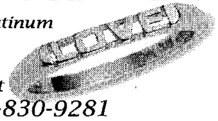

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POP MUSIC

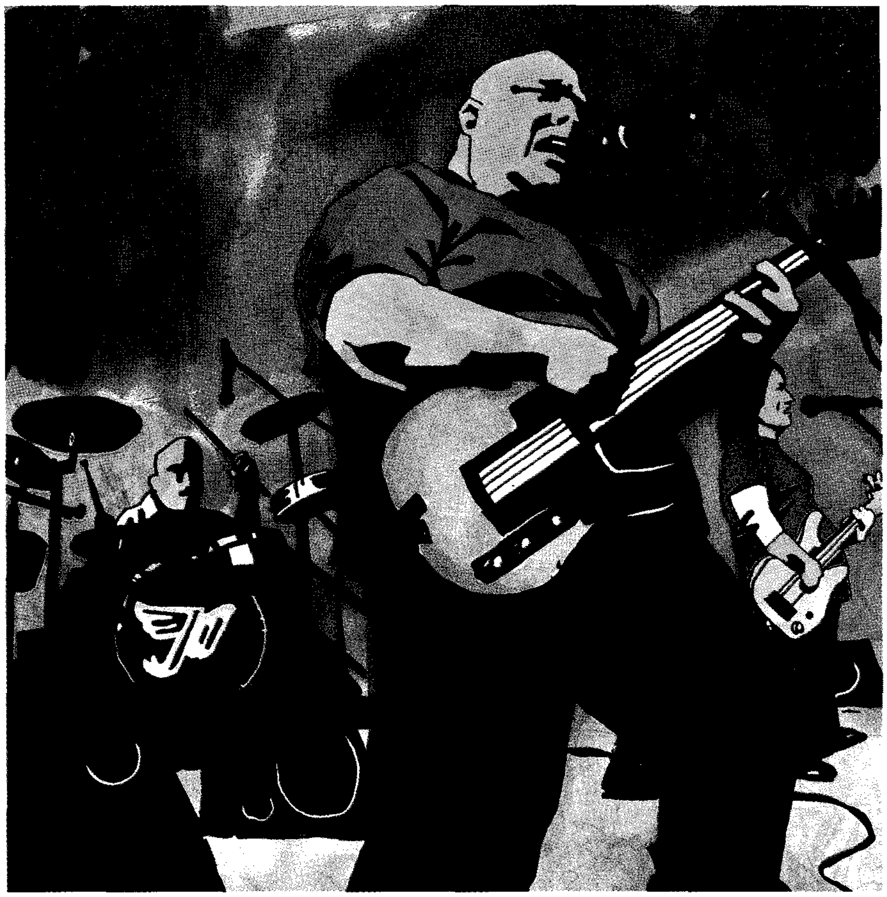
WHEN I'M SIXTY-FOUR

Aging rockers onstage.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

Rock bands, like people, are living longer. U2 entered its twenty-sixth year by releasing a new album, "How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb," in November. Adding to the band's aura of durability, a special black-and-red U2 edition of the iPod, the trendiest of accessories, was released in conjunction with the album. At the age of fifty-seven, David Bowie completed a hundred-and-twelve-date tour during 2004, survived being struck in the eye by a fan's wayward lollipop, and underwent heart surgery. And at sixty-three Bob Dylan is sometimes on the road for as many as twenty weeks a year, more than some musicians a third his age.

The audience and the press have aged, too. Responding with a sympathetic eye to the spectacle of so much rude life, critics sometimes forsake professional dispassion for cohort cheerleading. Dylan topped many best-of lists in 2001 with his gnomic blues-rock album "Love and Theft." U2 is enjoying positive reviews for "How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb," which sounds like one vigorous, catchy single—"Vertigo"—surrounded by a lot of well-meaning, ambient warmth. The recorded pop canon has a cruel tendency to move forward on the music of fearless newcomers, but live performance gives veterans a chance to even out the score. In 2004, many of the best shows came from older groups who—perhaps owing to experience, new sobriety, humility, or all three—improved their repertory through performance, in ways that their juniors can't.



The Pixies now seem at home in their geeky, aggressively strange songs.

JEROEN KOOLHAAS

In the nineteen-eighties, the Pixies created an idiosyncratic version of rock. The group's songwriter and lead singer, Frank Black, calling himself Black Francis, wrote surreal, violent lyrics, and then squawked them over minimal guitar rock that went from very soft to very loud very quickly. (Nirvana's Kurt Cobain once said that the band's biggest hit, "Smells Like Teen Spirit," was essentially a "rip-off" of the Pixies.) The Pixies had minor hits and some videos on MTV, but nothing to match the success of, say, Nirvana. Last year, after more than ten years of writing music in separate bands and nursing a mysterious feud, the group's members reunited. Their audience seems to have expanded; tickets for Pixies shows were selling for more than three hundred dollars on eBay during an eight-night stand in December at the Hammerstein Ballroom. Several times that week, I passed people on the street quoting Pixies lyrics to one another. Record stores played their songs in the same way that a government might hoist a flag for a visiting foreign dignitary, as if it were a civic duty.

Never a devout fan, I was surprised by how coherent and forceful the Pixies sounded at the Hammerstein show. The band took the stage as the theme from a spaghetti Western played, a comically sinister tune in keeping with the onstage décor: three black, leafless trees, which nicely evoked the long-suffering survivor.

The Pixies spent the eighties singing about menacing natural phenomena—lethal sludge, mutilating waves, holes in the sky. Now they look like science teachers, and seem more at home in their geeky, aggressively strange songs. Frank Black is fat, and, from the mezzanine at least, he looked bald. The guitarist, Joey Santiago, is quite trim, but he also lacks hair. Thickened with age, the bassist, Kim Deal, stood rooted to her spot. In fact, hardly anyone onstage moved, and the banter was limited to a few remarks. Yet this static tableau concealed a giddy tension, and as the show unfolded it became clear that the Pixies are much better live today than they were the first time around. The college-boy surrealism works now that Black isn't trying so hard to sell it with all the winking and mugging that make the band's early videos almost unwatchable. Santiago turned the hoariest part of any rock show—the electric-guitar solo—into a vaudevillian magic act. Parking his guitar on a stand in the middle of the stage, he used a drumstick to coax sound from the instrument without touching it. After the last song, instead of retreating backstage in order to reëmerge triumphantly for an encore, the musicians simply walked back and forth and waved to the crowd. Then Black, at the microphone, asked Deal, "Do you wanna do another one?" "Sure, why not!" she replied, and the band launched into "Gigantic," a vast, thrumming song driven by Deal's fierce, tiny voice.

But, in one sense, the Pixies have it easy. They broke up in 1993, have written only one song since, and never made a bad record. Their set list draws exclusively from five recorded albums, which is just as fans would have it. Acts that hang on past the twenty-year mark must juggle the new and the old in a live setting. R.E.M.'s show at Madison Square Garden in November illustrated how tricky that can be. The band has experienced serial waves of popularity, each of which brought an audience quite distinct from, and possibly even hostile to, the previous one. Michael Stipe, the group's lead singer, had one of the most important male voices of the eighties, huge and rich but expressive and labile enough to suggest either male or female consciousness. The band, celebrated in the early eighties for its chiming, indecipherable rock, entered the mainstream with the 1991 hit "Losing My Religion." The lyrics weren't easy to parse, but at least you could make them out. In 1992, "Everybody Hurts," a dismayingly obvious but affecting ballad, found its way onto the television show "My So-Called Life," and made the band's music ubiquitous.

Longtime fans—like me—could have written off R.E.M. in a fit of snobbishness. Its last three records haven't helped much, each one more limp than the one before. The show at the Garden might well have been dull, but the band was unexpectedly explosive. Stipe, once a mumbler who disappeared behind long hair and baggy clothes, has become one of rock's most extroverted singers. He wore a loose white suit, and encircling his head was a thick stripe of black makeup that made him look like an exiled member of the Incredibles. He galloped across the stage, swivelled his hips, and saluted the audience repeatedly.

Stipe isn't just a compelling performer—his evolution as a singer recalls Frank Sinatra's in the nineteen-sixties. The original tone and resonance remain, and are enhanced by a new vocal heft and increased range at the bottom end. When Stipe and the bassist Mike Mills sang harmony, the sound filled the arena. Song after song, they seemed born to the job. Perhaps aware of this, Stipe said, "We're R.E.M., and this is what we do." One gripe: not having had the chance to die and come back victoriously, the band is playing too many songs from its newer albums. If asked, I couldn't name a single R.E.M. song from the past five years. The band's legacy was better served whenever one of the older, more fully elaborated tunes popped up.

The solution to repertory problems is finding the right curator. Nobody did a better job of judging his own songbook last year than David Bowie. When his A Reality tour stopped at Jones Beach, in June, Bowie put on a hugely enjoyable and consistent show. At the heart of the set were the chunky rock anthems that made a slightly effeminate man with one blue eye a favorite of classic-rock fans: "Ziggy Stardust," "Suffragette City," "Diamond Dogs." Saddled with an ugly velvet jacket, Bowie was the consummate host, walking casually around a very big, high-tech set as if he were onstage in a small club. Like R.E.M., Bowie continues to record, but his albums still have strong moments and he knows exactly where they are. So, in the middle of a performance that appealed, not unfairly, to well-worn memories, Bowie slipped in a song from 1996, "I'm Afraid of Americans." Playing with the precision and confidence that come from having performed hundreds of times, the band laid into the song as if it contained an urgent message. Backed by a big-screen video loop of two cartoon characters wrestling, Bowie leaned into the microphone and enunciated each word: "I'm afraid of Americans / I'm afraid of the world / I'm afraid I can't help it / I'm afraid I can't." Maybe we missed the song when it came out, but Bowie wasn't bothered. He knew he could keep playing it, year after year, until we heard it the way he did. It's a skill that does not come easily, or quickly. ♦

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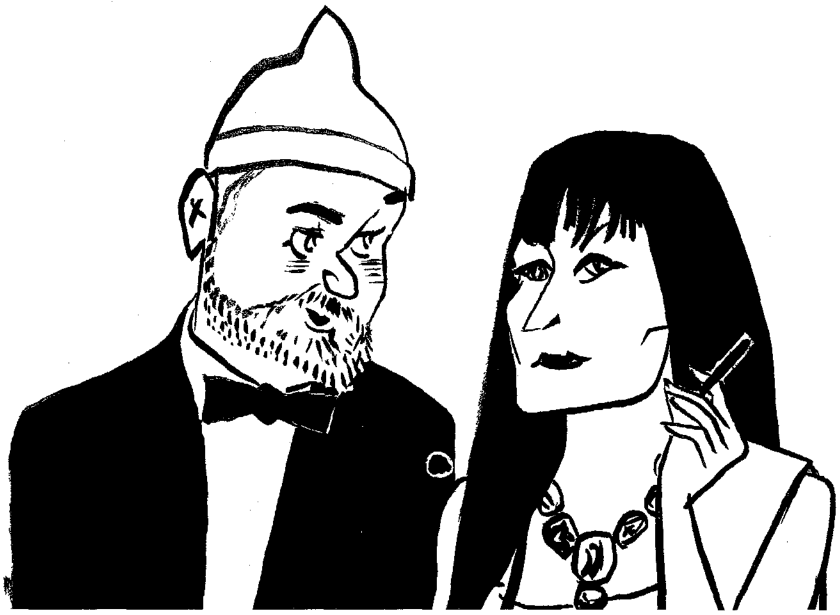
GO FISH

"The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou."

BY ANTHONY LANE



Bill Murray and Anjelica Huston in Wes Anderson's new movie.

TOM BACHTELL

The new Wes Anderson picture, "The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou," features Bill Murray as Steve Zissou, plus a shoal of other stars. It is impossible to imagine an Anderson project with a single, refulgent name gleaming above the title. His movies appear to be modelled on theme parties, with as many performers as possible invited along. What the theme of "The Life Aquatic" might be is still a mystery, although I suspect that it concerns the perils of being all at sea. Everybody here seems adrift. First, there is Zissou himself, who for years has captained a series of adventures, both oceanographic and landlocked (how readily one can picture him lost in space), funding them from the documentary films that he shoots en route. His crew, which includes a Sikh cameraman and an Australian technician, is loyal to a fault, with Klaus the German deckhand (Willem Dafoe) being an especially fine study in resentful slavishness. There is also Steve's business partner, who is an indispensable part of the setup until he meets a giant jaguar shark and becomes, for all practical purposes, lunch.

Steve sets off after the shark, to avenge the ingestion of his friend. He already has considerable experience of large, luminous man-eaters, having been married to one for years. Eleanor (Anjelica Huston), a stately figure with lagoon-blue streaks in her hair, has long been the brains behind the Zissou operation. In a fresh twist of the knife, she has recently taken up with Steve's richer and more oleaginous rival, Hennessey (Jeff Goldblum), who was once married to her himself. "We've never really made great husbands, have we?" he asks Steve, adding, "I mean, I have a good excuse. I'm part gay." Steve is unfazed. "Supposedly, everyone is," he replies. Only by raiding one of Hennessey's marine-research facilities (at which point Anderson himself is raiding his memories of James Bond, I would guess) can Steve equip himself for the shark hunt—his rusty, heartfelt, hopelessly compromised exercise in Ahab Lite.

A lot goes on in "The Life Aquatic" without much really happening. There are pirates and shootouts; there is a mutter of mutiny; above all, there is a mournful subplot, which may or may not gesture toward the Marina of Shakespeare's "Pericles," in which a wave-borne father is reacquainted with a lost child. At the launch party for his latest film, Steve is approached by Ned Plimpton (Owen Wilson), a pilot for the scary-sounding Air Kentucky, who claims to be the product of a liaison in Steve's past. Nonplussed for a moment, Steve soon reverts to his state of superplussed cool, introducing the new arrival with the words "Oh, and this is probably my son Ned." After "Rushmore" and "The Royal Tenenbaums," both of them graced by Bill Murray, we have grown accustomed to the unassailable claims of deadpan, although Anderson's detractors might argue that underreaction, having begun as a show of hipness, has now frozen into a mannerism. What chance remains, they would ask, for the venting of genuine feeling? What would it take to harry these controlled characters into grief, or the silliness of bliss, or unconsidered rage?

These are fair points. You sense that some stretches of action in "The Life Aquatic" are being lightly held within quotation marks; the clash with the pirates, say, which starts on board and continues on shore, may be desperate and bloody, yet an unmistakable air of playacting mingles with the gunsmoke. On the other hand, nobody could leave "The Life Aquatic" without the impression of having nearly drowned in some secret and melancholy game. Why, for example, do almost all the characters avail themselves of the opportunity to don a uniform? Is Anderson quietly signalling that he is ready and willing to helm a Second World War movie? He would certainly warm to the idea of young men having to team up, dress up, and grow up in a hurry, since one of the more endearing things about him—and this presumably makes him a highly suspect creature in Hollywood waters—is that, for a young director, he seems increasingly unbothered by the problems of youth. The most representative line in the new picture comes from a rueful Zissou: "I know I haven't been at my best this past decade." Even the hero of "Rushmore," though nominally a teen-ager, radiated a grave perplexity, as if he could not understand why one should have to wait until midlife to enjoy one's crisis. Then came Gene Hackman, in "The Royal Tenenbaums," and now Bill Murray in "The Life Aquatic," both of them grizzled and itchy with bewilderment. It is true that Hackman was seen whizzing around on a go-cart, and that Murray is most at ease in flippers, as if he were part porpoise, but there is all the difference in the world between living a happy childhood and the pathos of pretending to replay it.

It is heartening to reflect that the best of Bill Murray may be yet to come. These days he is a wiser and a madder man; his ennui has lost any trace of a pose, and he sits around (for a tall guy, he can look oddly squat, verging on the shrunken) as if wearing an invisible T-shirt that says "I Told You So." The best thing about "The Life Aquatic" is the skill with which it plays off that instinctive disillusion against the verve of Steve, who is required by profession to be not just an optimist but a marveller. The character of Zissou has plainly evolved from Jacques Cousteau, whose underwater explorations, in the nineteen-fifties and sixties, now strike us as the last gasp of world-thirsty innocence, when the ecosystem was still something to goggle at rather than fret about. Hence the grace notes of unlikely nostalgia that litter Anderson's movie: the creaky old computers on board ship; the black-tie audience that awaits the première of the latest Zissou film; the gorgeous tour of his beloved vessel, the Belafonte, that is cut away like a toy boat, in cross-section, for our delight; and the bracing presence of Jane Winslett-Richardson (Cate Blanchett), a blond British reporter from another age, who, for a while, cannot quite bring herself to curse.

Just to complete the mix, there is David Bowie. Not in person—there are limits to this movie's weirdness—but in Portuguese. One of the crew, Pelé dos Santos (Seu Jorge), likes to hang out in the crow's nest, or wherever, doodling on his guitar and crooning relaxed little riffs on "Space Oddity" or "Rebel Rebel." At one wondrous point, Steve walks the length of the boat by night, up toward the bow; something has been playing in the background, and now it flames into the open—"Life on Mars?," in its original form, a song that has had ample time to grow cheesy, but which, by the mysterious workings of pop, has grown more triumphantly sad with the years. What matters is that Steve is still in aftershock; that first encounter with Ned has barely subsided, and all the emotional noise that was tamped down by civilized aplomb is now let loose through Bowie's keening, interplanetary chorus. Anderson is doing the opposite of what most directors aim for: he is using music not for big, crunch-time scenes but for small, chewy scraps of experience, like a stroll on deck—not to lend them an importance they don't deserve but to suggest that they might, in retrospect, turn out to be big after all.

The best way to treat "The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou" is as half of a double bill, matched with Brad Silberling's "Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events." Current hearsay states that the latter is some sort of Harry Potter ripoff, but, as usual, hearsay is wrong. True to its title, it is the funereal saga of three children, orphaned and wizardless, striving to flee the clutches of a maleficent uncle and falling into one noxious trap after another. Like "The Life Aquatic," it functions on the principle that messed-up families are funny, but only by a whisker. Both movies, thanks to special effects, feature invertebrates and miniature monsters that have never been glimpsed on this earth (I was much taken with Anderson's rhinestone bluefin, which is basically Dolly Parton with extra gills).

What is more, both movies slip the moorings of time and place, entering dark waters of their own invention; the cars in Silberling's film hail from the nineteen-fifties, but his fourteen-year-old heroine—played by the astounding Emily Browning, who is easily nonchalant enough, and mature enough, to wander into a Wes Anderson tale—dresses like a close friend of Edgar Allan Poe. Silberling sets his story in a gothically Europeanized America, whereas Anderson closes his with a Jamesian vision of Americans in Europe: Bill Murray in a tuxedo, on a warm night, descending the steps of an Italian town, with a child borne aloft on his shoulders. Each work may be wrapped in a stylized gloom, but that style unfolds with such intricate wit that you wind up, against expectation, more heartened than depressed. As Jane Winslett-Richardson would say, what an effing good combination. ♦

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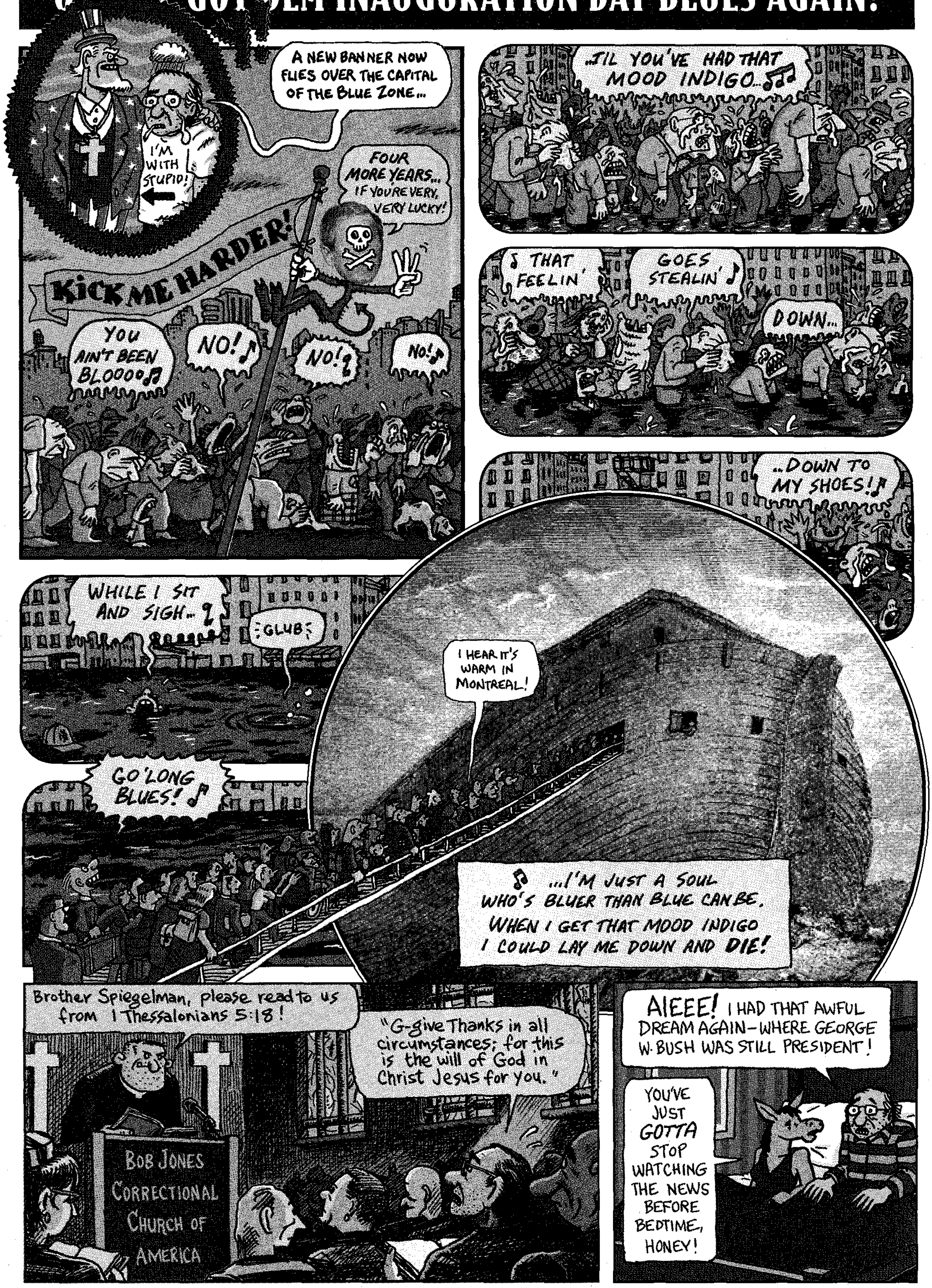
OY! WE GOT DEM INAUGURATION DAY BLUES AGAIN!


A NEW BANNER NOW FLIES OVER THE CAPITAL OF THE BLUE ZONE...
I'M WITH STUPID!
FOUR MORE YEARS... IF YOU'RE VERY, VERY LUCKY!
KICK ME HARDER!
YOU AIN'T BEEN BLOOOO♫
NO!♪
NO!♪
NO!♪
..TIL YOU'VE HAD THAT MOOD INDIGO...♫
♪ THAT FEELIN'
GOES STEALIN'♪
DOWN...
..DOWN TO MY SHOES!♪
WHILE I SIT AND SIGH..♪
GLUB
GO 'LONG BLUES!♪
I HEAR IT'S WARM IN MONTREAL!
♪ ...I'M JUST A SOUL WHO'S BLUER THAN BLUE CAN BE, WHEN I GET THAT MOOD INDIGO I COULD LAY ME DOWN AND DIE!
Brother Spiegelman, please read to us from 1 Thessalonians 5:18!
"G-give Thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."
BOB JONES CORRECTIONAL CHURCH OF AMERICA
AIEEE! I HAD THAT AWFUL DREAM AGAIN—WHERE GEORGE W. BUSH WAS STILL PRESIDENT!
YOU'VE JUST GOTTA STOP WATCHING THE NEWS BEFORE BEDTIME, HONEY!

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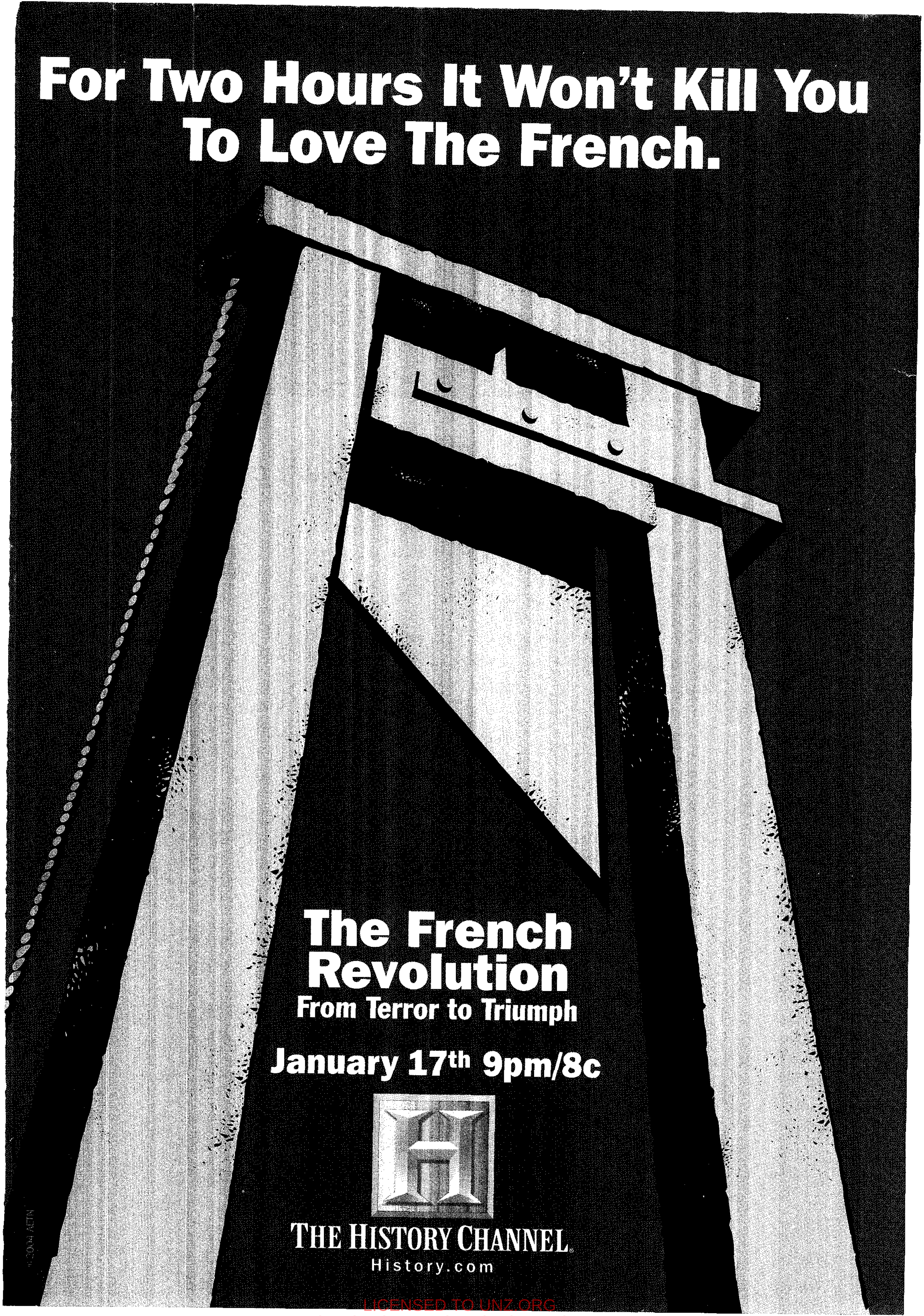

For Two Hours It Won't Kill You To Love The French.

The French Revolution

From Terror to Triumph

January 17th 9pm/8c

THE HISTORY CHANNEL.

History.com

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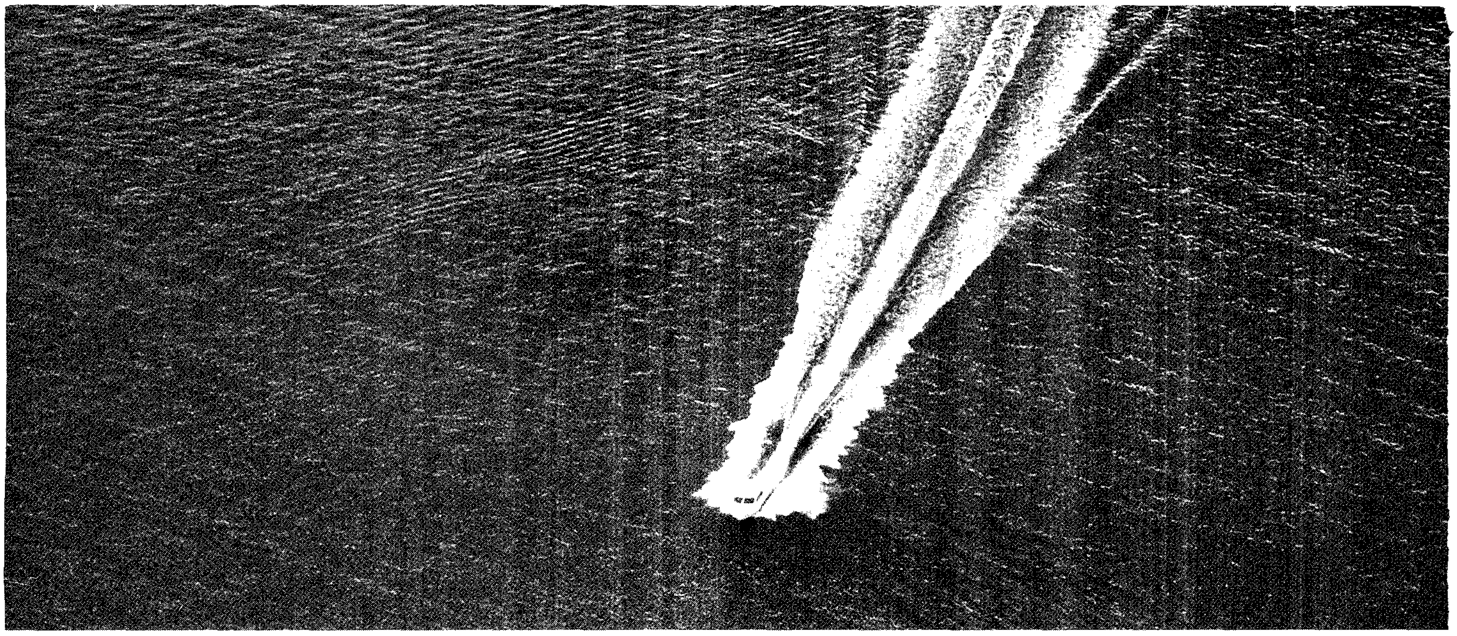

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A car is only as good as its engine. Which is why, at GM, we challenge engines in ways normal driving can't. In fact, some of our most demanding tests of engine durability happen at a place where you can't drive a car at all.

They happen at sea, where nearly all of the gasoline stern drive and inboard boats in the United States feature a GM-powered marine engine under the hatch. Marine engines are built starting from some of the very same base engines found in our cars and trucks. On the water, where there are no towing services or mechanics, durability is critical. Cutting through pounding waves alone requires up to fifteen times the horsepower needed to power an automobile at the same speed on a level road. It's the equivalent of driving a truck with a 15,000-pound trailer up a steep 10% grade. It's a harsh environment for any engine, which is exactly why we do it.

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We're building engines people count on. In cars. In trucks. And in vehicles where miles per hour are measured in knots and the traffic signals flash from lighthouses.

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